

**Pure Land and the Kingdom of God: Toward a Contextual  
Christian Dialogue with 'Humanistic Buddhism' in Taiwan**

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed entirely by myself, Ju-Ta Pan, and that it has not been accepted in my previous application for a degree

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### **Abstract of Thesis**

This thesis addresses the challenge of Christian dialogue with Buddhism in Taiwan. It explores the hypothesis that Christian dialogue with Buddhism is essential for the fuller contextualization of Christianity in the religiously plural society of Taiwan, and argues that such dialogue is possible on the basis of common Chinese humanistic values and ethical-spiritual concerns.

The thesis begins with a historical analysis of religious plurality of Taiwan, and recognizes that Taiwanese Christianity has historically distanced itself from the tendencies of pragmatic syncretism that characterise religious pluralism in Taiwan. The thesis then examines, on the basis of empirical research, the perceptions that Taiwanese Christians and Taiwanese Buddhists have of each other, and their actual experience of inter-religious dialogue. Against this analysis of factors that impede or impel the growth of inter-religious dialogue, the thesis proceeds to develop a model for dialogue between Taiwanese Protestants and Buddhists, based on 'Humanistic Buddhism' (人間佛教) and the resources of contextual theology as developed particularly by the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The thesis argues that these trends offer the basis of a "Kingdom-centred" contextual inter-religious dialogue, in which Taiwanese Protestants and Buddhists may draw on their shared Chinese heritage, and their respective concerns for the transformation of society through the implementation in this world of their eschatological hope of the Pure Land and the Kingdom of God.

The thesis is presented in three parts. Part One offers a conceptual analysis of religious pluralism in Taiwan, illustrating the syncretistic and pragmatic character of Taiwanese religions, and arguing for the necessity of inter-religious dialogue for the fuller contextualisation of Christianity in Taiwan. Part Two examines the contemporary state of Christian-Buddhist interaction in Taiwan, identifying problems and potentials of dialogue. Part Three constructs a contextual model of Christian-Buddhist dialogue that draws on the insights of selected Taiwanese Protestant contextual theologians, and other international dialogue theologians, and integrates the Confucian values of altruism, moral attainment and concern for this world with 'Humanistic Buddhism' and Protestant contextual theology. The final chapter proposes a framework for contextual Christian-Buddhist dialogue that engages common commitments to a praxis of social and spiritual reformation of Taiwanese society through the implementation of the Buddhist vision of the Pure Land and the Christian vision of the Kingdom of God.

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I am grateful to Atlanta Chinese Christian Church the North, Chinese Bible Church of Greater Boston, Chinese Theological Educational Ministry, David H. Tribou Fellowship Boston University, Dr. & Mrs. Hu Theological Scholarship, and Glasgow Chinese Christian Church. Through their financial supports, I have seen my God's special hand of providence in the undertaking of my thesis. Though I would like to mention many others by name, I will simply say that I owe my gratitude to many individuals who have given any financial help during my study.

The last but not the least gratitude will be due to my family. I feel gratefulness that my pious mother who regularly prays for me and encourage my study and ministry. My daughter Wei-Kuang is so mature and provides a joyful and supportive environment for my study. My wife, Chao-Luan knows only too well how much I depend on her company, love, and support. They need no words to know my appreciation, but this at least puts my deep gratitude on paper.

May the glory be to my Lord, who saved me and called me to be His servant, and guides me to the accomplishment of this study.

**List of Abbreviations**

<i>ACRP</i>	Asian Conference of Religions and Peace
<i>CBA</i>	Chinese Buddhist Association
<i>CCA</i>	Council of Churches in Asia
<i>CCRA</i>	Chinese Christian Rescue Association
<i>CCT</i>	Catholic Church in Taiwan
<i>CES</i>	China Evangelical Seminary
<i>CIBS</i>	Chunghwa Institute of Buddhist Study
<i>CIDEC</i>	Commission for Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenical Cooperation
<i>CLS</i>	China Lutheran Seminary
<i>CRPA</i>	China Religious People Association
<i>DFI</i>	Dialogue with People of Living Faith and Ideology, World Council of Churches
<i>DHR</i>	A Declaration on Human Rights
<i>DMP</i>	Democratic Progressive Party
<i>DRS</i>	Department of Religious Studies, Fugen Catholic University
<i>FJCU</i>	Fugen Catholic University
<i>KMT</i>	Nationalist Party or Government (Kuo-min-tang)
<i>MCS</i>	Modern Chan Society

<i>MPC</i>	Mandarin Protestant Church in Taiwan
<i>OA</i>	Our Appeal
<i>PCSEATS</i>	Principals' Conferences of Southeastern Asian Theological Schools
<i>PCT</i>	Presbyterian Church in Taiwan
<i>PRC</i>	People's Republic of China
<i>PSONF</i>	The Public Statement of Our National Fate
<i>RCC</i>	Roman Catholic Church
<i>ROC</i>	Republic of China (Taiwan)
<i>SKMS</i>	Sheng Kung Missionary Sisters
<i>TCCCA</i>	Theological Commission of Christian Conference of Asia
<i>TCRP</i>	Conference of Religions and Peace in Taiwan
<i>TEF</i>	Theological Education Fund, World Council of Churches
<i>TTCS</i>	Tainan Theological College and Seminary
<i>UN</i>	United Nations
<i>VCII</i>	The Second Vatican Council
<i>WCC</i>	World Council of Churches

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## Introduction

### Aim of the Thesis

This thesis, “Pure Land and the Kingdom of God: Towards a Contextual Christian Dialogue with ‘Humanistic Buddhism (人間佛教)’ in Taiwan” seeks to further Christian dialogue with ‘Humanistic Buddhism’ in Taiwan through the common ground of Taiwanese culture and the parallel of two religions’ views on the ideal world, which in ‘Humanistic Buddhism’ is the establishment of the Pure Land in this world and in Taiwanese Christianity is the actualisation of the Kingdom of God in the homeland of Taiwanese. The religious situation in Taiwan and the tendency of globalisation provide the setting of this thesis.

As in many Asian countries, Christianity in Taiwan finds itself in a peculiar religious situation. Taiwan, as a nation, expresses itself a religiously pluralistic society. Prior to the introduction of the Christianity, many religions existed in Taiwan, steeped in both a long history and rich cultural heritage. Taiwan also maintains a state of religiosity, meaning that religion is closely related to the daily life of Taiwanese people. In addition, Taiwanese Christianity, as a new comer, is a minority religion and has not yet been accepted as a part of Taiwanese culture.

This situation marks the urgency with which the Christian Church in Taiwan must deal with its relationship to other Taiwanese religions. The established Christian churches in other areas of the world view inter-religious dialogue as a new form of mission directly due to the advent of globalisation and the Church’s desire to foster relationships with other religions. This has not been the case with the Church in Taiwan. It is in this setting that this thesis attempts to encourage the Christian Church in Taiwan towards dialogue with Buddhism and other religions by positing a workable model of Christian-Buddhist dialogue.

This thesis will not produce a comparative study between Christianity and Buddhism, though there will be a brief treatment of elements that could prove either barriers or common ground for dialogue. It does not aim to deconstruct the historical study of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan though the history and present status of Buddhist-Christian interaction will be briefly examined in order to evaluate the prospect of future successful Christian-Buddhist dialogue. Moreover, this study can not represent a real dialogue because real dialogue between religions can not occur in a one sided literary work, but takes place in terms of people, either person to person or community to community. The aim of this thesis is to critically assess the factors in the



pluralist religious culture of Taiwan that impede or promote the growth of inter-religious dialogue, and, with reference to Taiwanese and international theologians of inter-religious dialogue, to identify and examine contextual theological resources upon which Taiwanese Christians could engage in dialogue with 'Humanistic Buddhism' in Taiwan.

The actual condition of religions in Taiwan leads the author of this study to consider 'Humanistic Buddhism' to be the primary dialogue partner for Taiwanese Christianity. First, Mahāyāna Buddhism has been one of three Chinese institutional religions,<sup>1</sup> and has been considered a great success in its indigenisation with Chinese culture. In a country where most of the residents are Chinese emigrants, Buddhism exerts a profound influence in Taiwanese society. Second, the rise of the Humanistic Buddhist movement since the 1980s has helped Buddhism to become the most prominent religion in Taiwan. Its influences are shown not only in the burgeoning increase of Buddhist followers, but also in its active engagement with Taiwanese community. Related to this, the transformation of Buddhism in the early 1980s yielded a faith with expressly humanistic characteristics, which are considered by this thesis as essential elements of Chinese culture, and therefore the common ground for inter-religious dialogue in Taiwan.

### **The Scholarly Disciplines to which This Thesis Relates**

#### **A Study of Inter-religious Dialogue**

This thesis draws from different fields of theo-scholastic disciplines, of which their literary sources constitute this study. At first, the topic of this thesis has clearly shown it to be a place of research about inter-religious dialogue. The writings of Christian theologians and religious leaders who have worked on inter-religious dialogue, provide profound resources for this study.

#### **Asian Theologians of Inter-religious Dialogue**

The researcher is inspired by the writing of Stanley J. Samartha, late director of the Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies, World Council of Churches (WCC). In his 'Courage for Dialogue', Samartha illustrates the importance and purpose of inter-religious dialogue claiming:

At this hour of history when the destinies of all people everywhere—not

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<sup>1</sup> These three institutional Chinese religions are Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism.

only of Christians—are being drawn together as never before, and when, because of the massive power of impersonal forces, the need to recognize the ultimate source of human personal being and community life is so urgent, dialogue offers a helpful opportunity to renew true religious quest... Therefore, Christians cannot and should not at this juncture withdraw from dialogue; on the contrary, there is very reason to extend and deepen it.<sup>2</sup>

In this passage, Samartha points out the urgency and significance of inter-religious dialogue to the Churches in the researcher's context.

Lynn de Silva, a Methodist theologian working on Christian dialogue with Buddhism in Sri Lanka, also presents marvels of great value to this thesis. In his 'The Problem of the Self in Buddhism and Christianity,' de Silva indicates the value of inter-religious dialogue, claiming that 'theological thinking in order to be meaningful and relevant must be contextual'<sup>3</sup> and that 'one's own faith can be deepened and broadened by a sympathetic and intelligent understanding of the faith of others.'<sup>4</sup> In the same work, he also provides a model of dialogue of Christianity with Buddhism, which is relevant to this thesis.

#### Taiwanese Theologians

Writings from two of Taiwan's first generation contextual theologians, Shoki Coe (黃彰輝)<sup>5</sup> and Choan Seng Song (宋泉盛) show the great significance of inter-religious dialogue for the Christian Church in the Taiwanese framework. They not only identify the necessity for Christian dialogue with indigenous Taiwanese religions in the Church's mission of contextualisation, but also elucidate the direction which that dialogue should take, established in the Taiwanese cultural heritage and meeting the needs of the Taiwanese context. Coe's speech, 'A Rethinking of Theological Training for the Ministry in the Younger Church Today' given to the Principals' Conferences of South Eastern Asian Theological Schools (PCSEATS) is the first source and the thesis explores his views on the necessity of contextualisation

<sup>2</sup> S. J. Samartha, *Courage for Dialogue: Ecumenical Issues in Inter-Religious Dialogue*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Lynn A. de Silva, *The Problem of the Self in Buddhism and Christianity*, London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1975, xiii.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., xii.

<sup>5</sup> A Taiwanese growing up in the Japanese colonialist period, Shoki Coe is his Japanese name. Coe's original Taiwanese name is 黃彰輝, which is usually translated to Ng, Chionghui according to Taiwanese pronunciation, or Huang Changhui according to Mandarin pronunciation. So, when he was director of TEF, he used the name C. H. Huang in the west.

and inter-religious dialogue for the Taiwanese Church. The other source, 'Ministry in Context', is an article published by Theological Education Fund (TEF), WCC in 1972, when Coe was director of TEF. The present study of these two sources in this thesis is indebted to William P. Russell's exposition in his dissertation 'Contextualization: Origins, Meaning and Implications.'<sup>6</sup>

C. S. Song's abundant writings inspire this thesis by seeking a novel approach to Christian dialogue with Buddhism in Taiwan.<sup>7</sup> In his 'Third Eye Theology,' Song points out the influences of the culture on the people and on religions indicating 'We are all under the power of the culture into which we are born. Our cultural heritage makes us what we are.'<sup>8</sup> He also cites the need for the Asian Church to establish a relationship with domestic Asian religions, noting 'the churches in the Third World are forced to reappraise critically the relationship between Christian faith and the cultural forms that shape the formulation of the faith.'<sup>9</sup> His thinking not only points out the necessity of inter-religious dialogue for the Taiwanese Church's mission of contextualisation, but also provides direction in seeking the model of inter-religious dialogue which best incorporates Taiwan's situation.

#### An Inter-religious Dialogue in an Asian Context

The difficulty facing inter-religious dialogue is that 'while similarities in religious experience and expression abound, the differences are even more abundant.'<sup>10</sup> Paul Knitter, in his 'One Earth Many Religions', proposes a direction for dialogue. A globally responsible model for dialogue, he argues, will eliminate the barriers to inter-religious dialogue resulting from the differences and make the common concerns of people in different religions the common ground of inter-religious dialogue. In his writing, Knitter points to a dialectical direction, in which 'all religions take on global responsibility as the central ingredient in their

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<sup>6</sup> See William P. Russell, *Contextualization: Origins, Meaning and Implications-- A Study of What the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches Originally Understood by the Term 'Contextualization,' with Special Reference to the Period 1970-1972*, Ph.D. diss., Apud Pontificiam University S. Thomae in Urbe, 1995.

<sup>7</sup> These writings include C. S. Song, *The Believing Heart: An Invitation to Story Theology*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999; *Jesus and the Reign of God*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993; *Theology from the Womb of Asia*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1988; and *Third Eye Theology: Theology in Formation in Asian Settings*, London: Lutterworth Press, 1972.

<sup>8</sup> C. S. Song, *Third Eye Theology: Theology in Formation in Asian Settings*, London: Lutterworth Press, 1972, 6.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>10</sup> Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue & Global Responsibility*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1995, 12.

efforts to understand themselves and other religious communities.’<sup>11</sup> This model has been practised and proven successful in the Asian context.<sup>12</sup>

### A Study of Religious History in Taiwan

This thesis is also inherently related to religious studies. It includes an examination of the religious situation of different religions drawing from the areas of social analysis and religious history. The literary sources used from these two disciplines are from the writings of both Western and Taiwanese religious scholars.<sup>13</sup> Among these studies, Robert P. Weller, an American anthropologist, shows a leading characteristic of Taiwanese religion. In his ‘Unities and Diversities in Chinese Religion,’ Weller states:

Gods, ancestors and ghosts in popular tradition usually get pragmatic, active interpretations. People talk about these spirits, and behave towards them, as if they were embodied beings that really affect the world. Many people recognize the moral or psychological functions of religion, and many also see it as a metaphor for the secular world.<sup>14</sup>

Weller’s statement hints at the pragmatic characteristics of Chinese and Taiwanese religion.

Among the writings of Taiwanese scholars, ‘The Social and Political Analysis of the Change of Religions in Taiwan (台灣宗教變遷的社會政治分析)’<sup>15</sup> a series of researches led by Taiwanese religious sociologist, Chiu Heiyuan (瞿海源), gives a broad and comprehensive overview of the religious situation in Taiwan. In addition, ‘The Religions and Cultures in Taiwan (台灣宗教與文化)’<sup>16</sup> co-written by Lee

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>12</sup> See Michael Amaladoss, *Life in Freedom: Liberation Theologies from Asia*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1997.

<sup>13</sup> These scholars include Wolfgang L. Gritching, David K. Jordon, Stephan Feuchwang, Robert P. Weller, Karl Ludvig Reichelt, Chu Heiyuan (瞿海源), Lin Mayrong (林美容), and Lin Benxiang (林本炫) on the social analysis of the religious conditions; Lishiwei (李世偉), Wang Zianchuang (王見川), and Zhen Ziming (鄭志明) on historical development of religion; Jiang Chanteng (江燦騰), Yan Zhengzong (閻正宗), and Huiyang (嚴慧) on Taiwanese and Chinese Buddhism; Holington K. Tong (董顯光) of the Protestant Church, Thomas de la Hoz of the Catholic Church, and PCT’s official publications in Christian history in Taiwan.

<sup>14</sup> Robert P. Weller, *Unities and Diversities in Chinese Religion*, London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1987, 145.

<sup>15</sup> See Chiu Heiyuan (瞿海源), *The Social and Political Analysis of the Change of Religions in Taiwan (台灣宗教變遷的社會政治分析)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Guiguan plc. (台灣台北: 桂冠圖書公司), 1997.

<sup>16</sup> See Wang Zhianchuan (王見川) and Lee Shiwei (李世偉), *Religions and Cultures in Taiwan (台灣宗*

Shiwei (李世偉) and Wang Jianchuan (王見川), is another influential source especially as it pertains to the history of Taiwanese Confucianism and folk beliefs.

### **A Study of the Beliefs and Transformation in Three Religions**

Besides the general condition of religion in Taiwan, this thesis also refers specifically to the doctrinal analysis and historical transformation of three religions: Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity in Taiwan. Among these three, 'Humanistic Buddhism' and the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) are adopted by this thesis to be two subjects of inter-religious dialogue. Furthermore, this thesis considers Confucian belief to be the common ground of dialogue between these two modern religious beliefs because, though recently declined, Confucianism has been the dominant belief in Chinese culture.

#### **Confucianism**

The study of Confucian belief in this thesis focuses mainly on the Analects, the original sayings of Confucius (孔子, 552-479 BCE).<sup>17</sup> Julia Ching's (秦家懿) study of the characteristic of Chinese culture contributes to this research in seeking the common ground of inter-religious dialogue. In 'Christianity and Chinese Religions', she states:

While these thinkers (in the Golden Age of Chinese philosophy), had different ideas on many points regarding religion and morality, their common impact was to strengthen the sense of human autonomy and rationality, associating human destiny, fortunes and misfortunes with the activities of human beings themselves rather than with the authority of the ghosts and spirits.<sup>18</sup>

This description addresses the humanistic and 'this-worldly' characteristics of Chinese culture and is in accord with the sayings of Confucius: 'Not able to serve other people, how would you be able to serve the spirits?' and 'Not yet understanding life, how could you understand death.' (Analects 11.12)<sup>19</sup> These sayings demonstrate the

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教與文化), Luzhou, Taiwan: Boy Young (台灣蘆洲: 博揚), 1999.

<sup>17</sup> The main source for its English translation is from Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr. trans., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, New York, New York: Ballantine Books, 1998.

<sup>18</sup> Hans Küng and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions*, London: Doubleday, 1989, 64.

<sup>19</sup> The English translation is from Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr. trans., *The Analects of*

humanistic and this-worldly characteristics which are expressed in the essence of Chinese culture.<sup>20</sup>

### Taiwanese Buddhism

This thesis draws on several sources for the study of Buddhism. Two writings about the history of Chinese Buddhism, 'The Syncretism of Chan and Pure Land Buddhism' by Hengching (釋恆清) and 'A Survey of the Syncretism of Chan and Pure Land (禪淨合一流略)' by Gu Weikang (顧偉康)<sup>21</sup> are used for the origin of the traditional Taiwanese Buddhist belief. Besides these, the working of Jiang Chanteng (江燦騰), 'The Study of the History of Taiwanese Buddhism for the Past One Hundred Years (台灣佛教百年史之研究)'<sup>22</sup> is the main source for examination of the historical development of Taiwanese Buddhism.<sup>23</sup>

The sources for the doctrinal foundations of 'Humanistic Buddhism' are based on the abundant writings of Master Yinshun (印順), a scholastic monk considered to have played a crucial role in the modern Buddhist movement. In his writings, Yinshun points out that a passage of Buddhist scripture, 'All Buddhas are originated from the human world and no one attains Nirvāṇa in heaven,'<sup>24</sup> is the basis of his thinking, and this expresses the essence of 'Humanistic Buddhism'. Additionally, the writings of Buddhist scholars Jiang Chanteng and Yang Huinan (楊惠南) give a clear exposition of Yinshun's thinking.<sup>25</sup> Speaking about the enhancement and practice of 'Humanistic

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*Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, New York, New York: Ballantine Books, 1998, 144. The original Chinese texts are: '未能事人，焉能事鬼，' and '未知生，焉知死。'

<sup>20</sup> Other sources about Confucianism include: The Department of History, Fudan University, ed., (上海復旦大學歷史系編), *Reconsideration of Chinese Culture, VI, The Characteristics of Chinese Traditional Culture (中國傳統文化的再檢討, 上編, 中國傳統文化的特徵)*, Hong Kong: Shangwu Publishing (香港: 商務印書館), 1987 and Wei, Zhengtong (韋政通), *Confucianism and Modern China (儒家與現代中國)*, Shanghai, China: People Publishing (中國上海: 人民出版社), 1990.

<sup>21</sup> See Gu Weikang (顧偉康), *A Survey of the Syncretism of Chan and Pure Land (禪淨合一流略)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Dongdah Books (東大圖書公司), 1997 and Shi Hengching, *The Syncretism of Chan and Pure Land Buddhism*, New York, New York: Peter Lang, 1992.

<sup>22</sup> Jiang Chanteng (江燦騰), *The Study of the History of Taiwanese Buddhism for the Past One Hundred Years: 1895-1995 (台灣佛教百年史之研究: 1895-1995)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Nantian Books (南天書局有限公司), 1996.

<sup>23</sup> Other sources include Huiyang (慧嚴), *The Early History of Taiwanese Buddhism (台灣佛教史前期)*, Chuang-Hwa Academic Journal of Buddhist Study (中華佛學學報), July 1995, 8; and Yan Zhengzong (閻正宗), *One Hundred Years of Taiwanese Buddhism (台灣佛教一百年)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Dongdah Books, 1999.

<sup>24</sup> Yinshun (印順), *Indian Buddhism (印度之佛教)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Zhengwen Publishing (台灣台北: 正聞出版社), 1991, 2. The Chinese text is: '諸佛皆出人間，終不在天上成佛也。'

<sup>25</sup> See Jiang Chanteng, *Essays on Modern Chinese Buddhist Thought (現代中國佛教思想論集)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Shin Wenfeng Publishing (台灣台北: 新文豐出版公司), 1990; and Yang Huinan (楊惠南),



Buddhism', Yang Huinan's 'The Phenomenon and Characteristics of New Taiwanese Buddhism after the End of Martial Law (解嚴後台灣新興佛教現象及其質)' builds a strong general analysis.<sup>26</sup> Other sources in this field are mainly from the writings or official articles published by major Humanistic Buddhist institutions.<sup>27</sup>

### The Contextual Movement in the Taiwanese Christian Church

Historically the Church in Taiwan has developed into three main Christian traditions, the Catholic Church in Taiwan (CCT), the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT), and the Mandarin Protestant Church (MPC).<sup>28</sup> Among these three Christian traditions, it is the PCT that pays the most attention to the Church's contextualisation in Taiwanese culture and society. The other traditions hold a different focus; the MPC has a strong other-worldly ethos, and ignores the mission of the Church's contextualisation. And although CCT has worked on the Church's inculturation since the 1960s, this ministry focuses entirely on Chinese culture, ignoring the search for self-identity in Taiwanese culture. The contextual movement of the PCT becomes the typical record of Christian dialogue with Buddhism in this thesis.

Unlike modern Buddhist beliefs, the contextual theology of the PCT has been distinctively developed by several domestic theologians. The writings of three of these representative theologians, Chen Nanzhou (陳南州), Huang Poho (黃伯和), and Wang Hsienchi (王憲治) provide the main sources for the analysis of PCT's contextual theology. Among these writings, 'The Theology of Identification,' by Chen Nanzhou marks identification (認同) as the essence of the PCT's contextual theology, claiming 'a theology of identifying oneself with the suffering and hope of Taiwanese

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*The Expectation of Contemporary Buddhist Thought (當代佛教思想展望)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Dongdah Books Plc. (東大圖書公司), 1991.

<sup>26</sup> See Yang Huinan, *The Phenomenon and Characteristics of New Taiwanese Buddhism after the End of Martial Law: A Study Centred on Humanistic Buddhism (解嚴後台灣新興佛教現象及其特質: 以人間佛教為中心的一個考察)* in *The Phenomenon of Taiwanese New Religions and the Study of Their Related Issues (台灣新興宗教現象及其相關問題之研究)*, Chiu Heiyuan ed., Taipei, Taiwan: School of Social Study, Academia Sinica (中央研究院社會研究所), 2002.

<sup>27</sup> Main sources include: Lu Huisheng (蘆蕙馨), *The Characteristics of Tzuchi's Modern 'Non-Temple Based' Buddhism (佛教慈濟功德會「非寺廟中心」的現代佛教特性)* in *Essays of Temples and Popular Culture's Conference (寺廟與民間文化研討會論文集)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Council for Cultural Affairs, Executive Yuan (行政院文化建設委員), 1994; Shengyen (聖嚴), *Pure Land in the Human World (人間淨土)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Dharma Drum Mountain Cultural and Educational Fund (法鼓山文化教育基金會), 2000; and Shinyun (星雲法師), *Humanistic Buddhism (人間佛教)*, Kaohsiung, Taiwan: Buddha Light Publishing (台灣高雄:佛光出版社), 1995.

<sup>28</sup> The development of these three traditions will be briefly described in Chapter One.

people and identifying itself to the history and culture of Taiwan.<sup>29</sup> Wang Hienchih marks 'homeland (鄉土)' as the subject that the Church is mainly concerned with.<sup>30</sup> In his 'A Theology of Self-Determination', Huang Poho marks self-determination, 'Chhut Thau Thi (出頭天)' as the goal that the Church strives for in relation to Taiwanese people.<sup>31</sup> The views of these three theologians constitute three main elements in the PCT's contextual theology. Further, three political statements made by the PCT in the 1970s, and related articles published later, are the main sources for the practices of PCT's contextual movement.<sup>32</sup>

### A Study with Contextualising Characteristic

The above account shows that the literary sources used, whether in English or in Chinese writings, are mainly the works of Chinese/Taiwanese scholars. This is because the author of this research considers that domestic writers have priority to speak on this issue, and that their works genuinely present domestic idiosyncrasies. Therefore, their thinking provides the information and theoretical foundation that best fit the Chinese or Taiwanese context and cultural soil. Since contextualisation is considered to be one of the issues in this study, this thesis intends to contextualise the research itself.

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

This thesis is established on a series of research questions and hypotheses. The first research question asked: 'How does the Taiwanese Christian community stand in relation to the religious pluralism of Taiwan?' The first hypothesis argues that 'Taiwanese Protestant Christianity has, since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, identified itself against the pluralist and pragmatic traditions of other Taiwanese religions in favour of

<sup>29</sup> See Chen Nanzhou, *The Theology of Identification—Protestant Churches' Construction of Indigenous Theology in the Context of Taiwan*, Logos, no 5, 2001, 88. The Chinese text is: '台灣本土神學是認同台灣人民苦難與盼望的神學, 也是認同台灣歷史與文化, 努力去辨識台灣歷史與文化的神學.'

<sup>30</sup> See Wang Hsienchih, *Some Perspectives of Homeland Theology in the Taiwanese Context* in *Frontiers in Asian Christian Theology: Emerging Trends*, R. S. Sugirtharajah ed., Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1994.

<sup>31</sup> See Huang Poho, *A Theology of Self-Determination: Responding to the Hope for 'Chhut Thau Thi' of the People of Taiwan*, Tainan, Taiwan: Chhut Thau Thi Theological Study Center, 1996.

<sup>32</sup> These articles include *The Statement on Our National Fate* (對國是的聲明與建議), *Our Appeal* (我們的呼籲), *A Declaration on Human Rights* (人權宣言), *The Mission of the Kingdom of God* (上帝國的宣教), and *21<sup>st</sup> Century's New Taiwan Mission Movement* (21世紀新台灣宣教運動). All these articles and their English translations are from PCT's official webpage: <http://www.pct.org.tw>



an exclusivist and other-worldly theology, as a consequence it is perceived as foreign to Taiwanese culture, and marginal to Taiwanese society.’ The methodology for proving this hypothesis will be the study of Taiwanese religious and Christian history through the analysis of literary sources and in-depth interviews.

The second research question is: ‘What is the contemporary state of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan?’ The supporting hypothesis is that: ‘Active dialogue between the two is impeded by mutual suspicions and indifference, and that initiatives taken by individual Christians and Buddhists have yet to stimulate support within their respective religious communities.’ Qualitative research into the views of two religious people of opposing views on inter-religious dialogue, along with some documented interactions between Christians and Buddhists are the main sources that confirm the second hypothesis.

The third research question is: ‘According to results of the qualitative research, what are the future prospects for Christian-Buddhism dialogue in Taiwan?’ Its hypothesis is: “On the basis of the conclusions of the qualitative research, the most productive way forward for Christian-Buddhist dialogue may lie in the realm of cooperative social action – the ‘dialogue of action’ – which can overcome mutual ignorance and indifference, and re-situate doctrinal questions in the sphere of shared socio-ethical concerns.” This confirmation of hypothesis will come through analysis of the data collecting from qualitative research.

The fourth research question asks: ‘Is it possible to develop a contextual foundation for Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan that would save it from suspicion by demonstrating its relevance and value to the needs of Taiwanese society?’ The related hypothesis will argue that: ‘Accepting the arguments of Taiwan’s first generation of contextual Christian theologians – Shoki Coe and C. S. Song – that Christian-Buddhist dialogue, in order to root itself in Taiwanese culture, should embrace the ethical principles of Confucianism—altruism, moral attainment, and concern for this world – that invite Christians and Buddhists to bring their spiritual and ethical teachings to bear on common challenges in Taiwanese society.’ This hypothesis will be confirmed by study of the literary sources by Coe and Song, and by study of writings about Confucian beliefs.

The fifth research question is: ‘What resources may be identified in modern Taiwanese Buddhism that potentially support social dialogue with Christianity?’ The related hypothesis is: “Acknowledging the influence of ‘Humanistic Buddhism’ in the 1980s, based on the teaching of Master Yinshun, Taiwanese Buddhism is in process of

transforming the traditional understanding of Pure Land to focus on this-worldly priorities, as evidenced in the range of Buddhist social services that Humanistic Buddhism has spawned. It will be suggested that this disposes Taiwanese Buddhists to an interest in Christianity that was previously ignored, and invites conversation with like-minded Taiwanese Christians.” The methodology to confirm this argument is an examination of doctrinal transformation constructed by Yinshun and practices of this socially engaged movement.

The sixth research question is: ‘What resources may be identified in modern Taiwanese Protestant Christianity that potentially support social dialogue with Buddhism?’ The corresponding hypothesis will be: “Acknowledging the influence of the movement of contextual theology within the PCT, that has succeeded in refocusing Christian understandings of the Kingdom of God in relation to the social and political challenges of Taiwanese society, this parallels trends in Humanistic Buddhism, and invites a ‘humanistic’ dialogue with Buddhism that promises to enhance the quality of Christian contextual theology by including the dimension of inter-religious dialogue.” This hypothesis is confirmed by examining the historical development of this contextual movement and its contextual theology.

The seventh research question is: ‘What model of Christian-Buddhist dialogue is most appropriate in the present state of Christian-Buddhist relations in Taiwan?’ It will be proposed that, “by focusing on the desire for the realisation of the Pure Land in ‘Humanistic Buddhism’ and of the Kingdom of God in contextual Christian theology, it is possible to encourage Taiwanese Christians and Taiwanese Buddhists to engage in a ‘dialogue of social action’ in which they address together issues of social concern, while respecting the differences of doctrine that divide them.” This hypothesis will be confirmed by exploring the current social situation through the writings of Taiwanese social analysts.

## **Methodology and Research Sources**

### **A Polymethodic Research**

Contemporary religious study is polymethodic by nature.<sup>33</sup> On one hand, religious studies draw from various human sciences, but on the other they cannot be reduced to any particular category. The research of this thesis demonstrates multidisciplinary and polymethodic characteristics. Section II presented the academic

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<sup>33</sup> Ninian Smart, *Methods in My Life*, in *The Craft of Religious Studies*, edited by Jon R. Stone, New York, New York: St. Martin's Press Inc, 1998, 20.

discipline this thesis refers to; this section briefly presents the methodology this research undertakes. The study of religious history constitutes an important part of this thesis including both general religious development in Chapter One, and the establishment and transformation of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity in China and Taiwan in chapters Four through Six. The exploration of the essence and characteristics in the religions belief structure relates to theological analysis. While establishing the theoretical foundation of the approach of Christian dialogue with Buddhism, the study of theologians' writings pertains to theological and missiological spheres. Social analysis is used to study the current fabric of Taiwanese society while considering the practice of two religions.

### **A Qualitative Research**

The literary sources were described in the second section. The following paragraphs will focus on the introduction to the field research. Qualitative research is chosen here to obtain data on topics, including the previous and current relationships between Christians and Buddhists, the current condition of inter-religious or Christian-Buddhist dialogue, the presently held views of the religious groups about each other and about inter-religious dialogue, and supplementary data about the history of Taiwanese religions. This research is mainly accomplished by in-depth interviews through open-ended questions. The choice of qualitative research is established on the premise that 'the purpose of gathering response to open-ended questions is to enable the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of views through prior selection of questionnaire categories.'<sup>34</sup> The researcher considers that this approach of data collection and analysis fits the character of this research and can help to establish the real situation of the above issues.

### **Sources of Data Collection**

The data of in-depth interviews was mainly collected from people of two religious communities: Buddhist and Christian. The views of each religion on the other and on Christian-Buddhist dialogue were obtained from interviewing people of different groups within the two religions. Christian interviewees were classified into the three main communities in Taiwan, CCT, PCT, and MPC. Interviewees in each

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<sup>34</sup> Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, London: Sage Publication, 1990, 24.

community composed different levels, including church leaders, scholars, local church clergy, and lay people, so as to acquire reasonable, comprehensive, and diverse information. Buddhist interviewees were mainly represented by both traditional Buddhists and Humanistic Buddhists. The interviewees in each community included monastic groups, lay people, and scholars.<sup>35</sup>

Some scholars and religious leaders who have actively participated in current inter-religious dialogue in Taiwan, are the second group of the interviewees so as to ascertain the current condition of inter-religious dialogue in Taiwan and their projections for its future. Scholars and religious people closely concerned with the transformation of 'Humanistic Buddhism' and PCT, are the third interviewing group, in order to acquire the 'on the ground' information about the way two religions have been transformed. Finally, considering the dearth of literary sources of the history of Taiwanese religions, especially in the history of interaction between Christianity and Buddhism, historians of the two religions comprise the fourth group of interviewees so as to collect supplementary information about religious history in Taiwan. Invariably, there are some overlaps between the above four research groups. The total number of interviews, including formal and informal, is fifty-three, composed of thirty-six in Christians and seventeen in Buddhists.

#### Data Collection

These interviews are the 'purposeful conversation,' in which descriptive data is gathered 'in the subject's own word so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the word.'<sup>36</sup> The interviewing questions were designed in advance according to the background of the interviewees and the purpose that each interview intended to reach. However, the researcher maintained flexibility during the interview. Sometimes, at the request of interviewee, the questions were proposed at the beginning of the interview. At others, the questions were only kept in researcher's mind or notes, and presented informally. Whether disclosing the questions at the beginning or not, the researcher always kept the possibility of changing the schedule and questions during the conversation, according to the response of the interviewees and the development of the conversation.

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<sup>35</sup> The complete list of interviewees' names and brief backgrounds is in the Sources Consulted.

<sup>36</sup> Robert C. Bogdan and Sari Knopp Biklen, *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods*, London: Allyn and Bacon Inc, 1982.

## Data Analysis

The average interviewing time was about two hours. Most of the interviews were taped and transcribed in Chinese with the exception of some where interviewees wished their names to remain confidential. For interviews that were not taped, the researcher took notes as comprehensively as possible immediately after the interview. After the work of transcription, all the data was analysed by the researcher according to topics. The above paragraph has indicated that the method is mainly qualitative; therefore, the approach of analysis is mainly inductive, moving from the individual perspective to the general concept. Together with some supplementary literary sources, most of the information in Chapters Two and Three, and part of Chapter One, is basically from the qualitative research described in this section.

## Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is presented in three parts. Part One, 'The History of Religions in Taiwan' provides the historical setting of Taiwanese religions by introducing the composition and nature of the religious plurality. Part Two, 'Empirical Study of Christian-Buddhist Relationships and Dialogue in Taiwan,' consists of two chapters. Its function is to assess the factors that impede or promote Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan through the study of the past interactions of Christianity and Buddhism and records of the dialogue between the two. Part Three, 'Constructing a Contextual Christian-Buddhist Dialogue in Taiwan,' consists of four chapters. Based on the setting provided, it seeks to develop a model of Christian dialogue with Buddhism by examining the resources of inter-religious dialogue, the beliefs of three Taiwanese religions, and the current social situation in Taiwan.

## Part One: The History of Religion in Taiwan

Part One contains the first chapter, 'The Historical Development of the Religious Pluralism in Taiwan.' It briefly portrays the history of religions in Taiwan, indicating the pluralist and pragmatic characteristics of Taiwanese religions, while pointing out the nature of the Taiwanese Church over against these two religious traditions, resulting in its perception as foreign to Taiwanese culture. These factual conditions illustrate the urgency for the Taiwanese Church to view inter-religious dialogue as an essential ministry.

## **Part Two: Empirical Study of Christian-Buddhist Relationship and Dialogue in Taiwan**

Chapter Two, 'Christian-Buddhist Relationship in Taiwan—the Interactions and Religious Views of the Other' and Chapter Three, 'The State and Assessment of Christian-Buddhist Dialogue in Taiwan,' present the results of qualitative research undertaken in 2002-2003. They express the factual condition of previous and current interactions between Taiwanese Christianity and Buddhism. The first half of Chapter Two presents the views of two groups of people about each other, and in the second part, their views on inter-religious dialogue. The current condition of Christian-Buddhist dialogue is presented and analysed in the first half of Chapter Three. Through the assessment of the factors that impede and promote inter-religious dialogue in the second half of Chapter Three, a Christian-Buddhist dialogue with a focus on cooperative social actions, has been fleshed out.

## **Part Three: Constructing a Contextual Christian-Buddhist Dialogue in Taiwan**

The topic of Part Three clearly expresses its purpose through the factual information provided by Part Two. There are four chapters. Chapter Four, 'Building up a Contextual Model of Christian-Buddhist Dialogue,' attempts to articulate the theoretical foundation for a Christian-Buddhist dialogue containing the characteristics of Taiwanese culture and fitting the current context in Taiwan. This chapter displays how this constructive work is based on the thinking of Taiwanese theologians, Shoki Coe and C. S. Song, and how humanistic elements of Confucian belief, the mainstay system of Chinese culture, provide the common ground for Christians to engage with Buddhists.

The argument of Chapter Four leads to the question: Do both Christianity and Buddhism in Taiwan contain these humanistic characteristics in their beliefs and mission, and thus make this dialogue possible? The next two chapters prove that recent transformations in the two show that both religions clearly express humanistic characteristics and social consciousness. Chapter Five, 'Establishing a Pure Land in This World—The Humanistic Buddhist Movement in Taiwan,' describes the transformation of Taiwanese Buddhism from a traditional understanding of other-worldly Pure Land to focusing on social engagement. By tracing the origin of traditional Taiwanese Buddhist's worldly withdrawal, exploring the doctrinal foundation of this transformation established by Yinshun, and by displaying its practices in social service, this chapter proves the real humanistic characteristic of



‘Humanistic Buddhism’ and its opportunity for dialogue with Taiwanese Christianity.

Chapter Six, ‘The Actualisation of the Kingdom of God in This World—the Contextual Movement of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan’, describes the origin, contents and ongoing development of the contextual movement and theology in PCT. This chapter presents how the development of this contextual movement and theology in PCT displays common humanistic elements and brings a prospect for Taiwanese Christians to dialogue with Buddhism.

After being assured that the two religious communities contain humanistic characteristics and therefore possess common ground for Christian-Buddhist dialogue, Chapter Seven, ‘Actualising an Ideal World Together—An Approach to Contextual Christian-Buddhist Dialogue in Taiwan,’ proposes a model of dialogue through the two religions’ desire for the realisation of an earthly ideal world in contextual theology. These parallel concepts affect common actions that can be for the reformation of Taiwanese society.

### **The Significance of This Thesis to Christian Theology and Church**

#### **The Significance to Christian Dialogue with Other Religions**

The beginning of the introduction mentioned that inter-religious dialogue has been considered by the world Christian Church as an essential ministry. This consciousness is based on the development of a new global situation, while being derived from the Church’s conscious need to understand the people of other faiths and to reconsider the meaning and practice of mission. Some Christian scholars and missionaries have become pioneers of Christian dialogue with other faiths. The establishment of Secretariat for Non-Christians of Roman Catholic Church (RCC) after the Second Vatican Council (VCI) and of Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies (DPLI) of WCC, marked a milestone for Christian dialogue with other religions and confirmed it as an important mission for the Christian Church.

Nevertheless, the practical development of inter-religious dialogue poses a dilemma. On the one hand, the sense of uniqueness and exclusivism among Christians, as well as among the adherents of other religions, are considered to be barriers of inter-religious dialogue. Thus, there are voices from Christian scholars claiming that, unless both sides of the dialogue give up the concept of superiority and are willing to stand in complete equality, it is impossible to have real and sincere dialogue.<sup>37</sup> This

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<sup>37</sup> Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002, 103-104.

tends to create some suspicion among the conservative Christians that inter-religious dialogue demands relinquishing the sense of uniqueness in religion and accepting all religions to be various paths to 'Ultimate Reality.' There then exists the difficulty in demanding that the adherents of religions give up this uniqueness realistically. Further, this view quickly arouses the suspicion that inter-religious dialogue will reduce participants' loyalty to their own faiths. No matter whether this suspicion is well founded, it ultimately hinders the Church's willingness to engage in dialogue with people of other religions.

The special context makes Asian theologians develop an alternative approach to inter-religious dialogue. This approach places direct conversation about doctrine and spiritual experience at the end of the dialogue and makes action in religions' cooperation in promoting social welfare the starting point. This alternative approach not only calms the suspicion of inter-religious dialogue noted above, but also adopts a model of dialogue fitting the context of Asia. Christian scholars such as Aloysius Pieris, Lynn de Silva, and Paul Knitter, indicate that inter-religious dialogue in Asia should focus on religious cooperation in striving to liberate people from poverty and the oppression of economic inequality. Therefore, the Asian context and cultural idioms produce a form of dialogue with an ethical make-up and liberative scope. This approach of inter-religious dialogue has had success in countries such as India, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Their success also certifies the statement that the meaning, basis, and purpose of dialogue should be various and flexible, due to the variety of particular contexts.

However, the success in the Churches in South or Southeast Asia does not mean that this model comfortably fits the context of Taiwan. As a part of Asia, Taiwan demonstrates characteristics similar to those of the Asian districts mentioned above. It is also a religiously pluralist society with Christianity as a minority religion. Like other countries in East Asia, the practical problem in Taiwan is not mainly poverty and economic inequality, but the self-adaptation during the transition of ideology and the social situation resulting from fierce economic development. Further, as a country emerging with its Confucian heritage, Taiwan shows a culture different from other societies in South and Southeast Asia. These different situations mean that Taiwan must find an inter-religious dialogue unique to its own context and cultural background. This model is just what this thesis intends to construct.

### **Rooting the Church in Domestic Context and Culture**



Relating to inter-religious dialogue is the trend of the Christian Church in the Third World to articulate its theology and missiology through the soil of their context and cultural heritages. Theologians are either concerned for the Christian Church's indigenisation or inculturation, a task encouraging the Church to engage with traditional culture, or to seek the Church's contextualisation, a task requiring Christianity to address changing social, economical, and political realities of the present context. Asia's special religious situation causes in the reality that this theological task of seeking the Church to root itself in the domestic context or local culture. Thus, it has to seriously consider the Church's dialogue with domestic religions and cultures.

The Christian Church in Taiwan has not yet achieved its mission of ingraining itself in Taiwanese culture. In the beginning, the Christian mission sought to identify itself to Taiwanese culture by decorating the fringe elements of Taiwanese culture in the external expression of Christian faith, in manners like architecture and hymns. After the 1970s, PCT started to seek the contextualisation of Christianity by expressing concern over political reformation and the Identity of Taiwan. This movement was a great leap in the Church's integration with Taiwan. However, thus far, this movement has focused primarily on the Church's identification with the social and political surface, but has not yet reached the deeper heart of Taiwanese culture. This thesis attempts to provide an approach for the Church to engage itself more fully with Taiwanese culture via Church dialogue with domestic religions. This task is established on the conviction that while the Church seeks to dialogue with other religions through the common ground of cultural heritage, inter-religious dialogue improves the Church's relations with other religions, and it moves it forward to its goal of indigenisation and contextualisation.

### **Records of Religious Theological Transformation**

This study also attempts to record the religious transformation in the two religious communities. The two selected communities for inter-religious dialogue in this study, PCT and 'Humanistic Buddhism,' experience transformation in their beliefs and missions, which do not tear down the foundation of their traditions, but, based on them, give new interpretations to fit their evolving situations. The focus of their transformation is derived from the two religions' other-worldly tendencies towards social engagement so as best to adapt themselves to Taiwanese culture and respond to the current needs of the society. This transformation also adds weights their influence

in Taiwanese society in making the two groups more palatable to the Taiwanese people. Their transformations not only present examples of how a belief system is adaptable to a society but also how their beliefs are brought into the cultural heritage. Although this study considers that their tasks have not been completely achieved, their transformation as recorded in this thesis still presents great value.

### **Limitations**

There are limitations to this thesis that will be briefly mentioned here. Firstly, although this thesis aims at proposing a model of Christian dialogue with Buddhism in Taiwan, it actually does not cover the beliefs and missions of all communities in the two religions, but merely selects one community within each religion which best illustrates the issues. This is because of the reality of variety in the belief and missiology among the various religious communities. As the starting point of Christian-Buddhist dialogue, the chosen community in each religion is governed by the researcher's understanding of those that are most likely to begin a dialogue. Nevertheless, the researcher has not been able to reach the belief of all the communities in two religions.

Secondly, this research pays much attention to the transformation of the two communities. Therefore, the introduction and analysis of their transformation are the focuses of this thesis. However, this thesis does not give a comprehensive description about the origin, contents, practice, and theological/buddhological significance, but focuses mainly on issues related to their visions of the ideal world and to humanistic characteristics exhibited in their beliefs and ministries. Therefore the study of the beliefs and practical actions of the two religious communities is not exhausted in this thesis.

Thirdly, the qualitative research in this thesis has not attained an exhaustive level. In field research, the events at the upper levels are normally quite obvious and the data, easier collected. Conversely, the real situation at the 'grass roots', though of great value in expressing the factual condition, is difficult to establish indeed. The qualitative research in this study disregards the information from grass roots sources and instead, seeks to discover its situation as comprehensively as possible through interviews at local pastors and lay people, and through evaluating the practical condition of Christian-Buddhist dialogue at the local level. Nevertheless, the limitations of doctoral research means that this study cannot spend more time in discovering the intriguing and enlightening factual condition of Christian and

Buddhist local community interaction.

### **A Personal Declaration**

Although this thesis remains academic, it is impossible for the researcher to remain completely objective. The background, religious experience, and motivation of the researcher influence this thesis and are worth mentioning here so that the reader can better understand the whole. There are three personal considerations that compel this thesis.

Firstly, as a Taiwanese and a Christian, the researcher possesses two identities and therefore holds the motivation of seeking to integrate the two complementarily. Further, as a Taiwanese with Chinese cultural heritages and a Christian minister holding Christian gospel with conviction, the researcher is also confident that this dual-background will help this journey along. Secondly, not only personally, but also theo-sociologically, the researcher grew up in Taiwan, a religiously pluralist society: this background forces me to realise that the Taiwanese Church cannot ignore the issue of plural religious relationships. My theological background is evangelical, which is normally considered as holding hostile and 'triumphalist' attitudes to other religions, and as resistant to inter-religious dialogue. However, I hold the conviction that, even maintaining a strong commitment to evangelical belief and theological standpoint, the Evangelical Church cannot avoid the issue of inter-religious dialogue. I intend to prove that even without a changing theological conviction, an evangelical Christian can still properly deal with healthy relationships with other religions. Thirdly, after the 1980s, Taiwan faced great changes in various spheres of its society. On the one hand, I am happy with the liberation and the vitality these changes have brought, but I am worried about the chaos created by them. As a Protestant minister, I consider that the Church ought not just provide an other-worldly expectation, but play a role in contributing to people's this-worldly wellbeing.

The above considerations urge me to start to seek a possible Christian-Buddhist dialogue fitting the current Church's situation and theological standpoint, while also beginning my own voyage of dialogue with people of other religions. The dual-background makes it easier for the researcher to proceed with this journey. Although, it is a new experience for myself and most Christians in Taiwan, I believe that this exploration will eventually bring benefits to myself and to Christians in Taiwan.

## **Chapter One**

# **The History of the Religions in Taiwan— The Historical Development of Religious Pluralism in Taiwan**

## **Introduction**

This first chapter introduces the religious complexity of Taiwanese society by reviewing the composition and the nature of its religious plurality. This discussion will follow a historical progression through what may be identified as seven periods of Taiwanese history, beginning from the era of the Three States (三國, 220-280 CE) in the third century CE to the present era of Democratisation which began at the end of martial law in 1987 CE. It is not intended to enter into a detailed discussion of Taiwanese history, but to introduce the religions that have taken root in Taiwan during this history, and to analyse their evolving characteristics in relation to the peoples and dynasties that have shaped Taiwanese culture. This means exploring the character of indigenous folk religions, as well as that of the religions that have been introduced to Taiwan from China and the West: Daoism, Buddhism, Confucianism from China, and Christianity both in its Catholic and Protestant forms from the West. This historical review will provide the background against which, in its final part, the chapter will offer an analysis of how Christianity has responded to the nature of Taiwanese religious plurality. This will set the scene for the substantive research, to be reported in subsequent chapters that focus on the challenges to Christian-Buddhist relations in contemporary Taiwan.

The historical analysis will reveal that Taiwanese religious culture is inherently plural, in the sense that it comprises several religious traditions. This thesis refers to the above as ‘religious plurality’, denoting the empirical phenomenon of multiple religions as a fact of life in the historical and contemporary circumstances of Taiwan. Being distinct from religious plurality, the term ‘religious pluralism’ will be used to refer to conceptual or practical ways of dealing with religious plurality.

This chapter will demonstrate that religious pluralism in Taiwan is best understood not as a static concept and practice, but as the dynamic interplay of two sets of polarity. The first is the polarity between syncretism on the one hand, and separatism on the other; between the mixing of elements of one religious tradition with another, and the self-definition of each religion in distinction from the other; between the capacity of Taiwanese people to adopt elements of different religions in their own communal and personal practices, and their tendency to chose one religion rather than

others. In either case this polarity is influenced by the second polarity, namely the tension between the functional value of religions and the metaphysical concepts that define the nature of truth and ultimate destiny. Recognising the danger of over-simplification, this chapter argues that religious pluralism should be analysed in the dynamic tension in which each religion stands between the poles of syncretism and separatism, pragmatism and ideology.

It will be argued in the later part of this chapter that Taiwanese Christian Churches, both Catholic and Protestant, have been reluctant to enter into the Taiwanese culture of religious plurality. Coming relatively late to Taiwan – in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries respectively – they have traditionally shown a courteous neglect towards the other religions in Taiwan, though this attitude has begun changing since the 1970s. Generally speaking, to be demonstrated in later chapters, the Christian Churches in Taiwan continue to bear the heritage of an exclusivist understanding of the gospel, and therefore resist the Taiwanese cultural tendencies towards pragmatic pluralism. This resistance will be offered as an explanation why Taiwanese Christianity remains marginal to Taiwanese society, and is still commonly perceived as a foreign religion, in contrast to Buddhism, which in the last few decades, has been in the process of transforming itself into a religion with a strongly pragmatic tendency. It is Buddhist pragmatism attracts many new adherents to the faith and gives it a dominant position in contemporary Taiwanese society. The hypothesis that will be examined is that Taiwanese Christianity has, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, identified itself against the plural and pragmatic traditions of Taiwanese religions in favour of an exclusivist and other-worldly theology, which consequently makes it perceived as foreign to Taiwanese culture, and thus, marginal to Taiwanese society.

The sources from which this chapter draws comprise a range of historical and social studies about the condition and development of religions in Taiwan. Most of these studies belong to the period of the 1980s to the present. Under the forty-two years of the Chinese Nationalist regime of Kuomintang (KMT),<sup>1</sup> the official policy of suppressing Taiwanese national and cultural identity militated against the study of indigenous history and religions. Few historians, sociologists or anthropologists were able to make significant studies into any aspect of Taiwanese culture under these adverse political conditions.<sup>2</sup> However, since the 1980s, the awakening of the

<sup>1</sup> Since the ending of martial law, KMT has started to move towards Taiwanese national identity, though this process is still on the way.

<sup>2</sup> Two representative domestic figures in this field are Li Yiyuan (李亦園) and Chiu Heiyuan (瞿海源). Their works are basically pioneering studies of Taiwanese religions. Dong Fanyuan (董芳苑), a



Taiwanese national consciousness has led many young scholars to initiate important inquiries into Taiwanese social studies, including the study of religion's role in Taiwanese culture.<sup>3</sup> Their research has provided valuable materials for the present project, which in turn hopes to contribute to this new wave of scholarship.

The factors mentioned above have specifically influenced the study of Christian and Buddhist history in Taiwan as well. Recent years have seen publications in the history of three important Christian traditions in Taiwan, one dealing with a century of Presbyterianism, another with Catholicism, a third with Mandarin Protestantism, and a fourth that examines all three traditions.<sup>4</sup> All of these histories conclude in the 1970s, however, and in the absence of a comprehensive history of contemporary Taiwanese Christianity, we have to rely on essays that deal with selected aspects of this modern history. There has been an equal dearth of scholarly literature dealing with the history of Buddhism in Taiwan until fairly recently when the distinguished Buddhist historian, Jiang Chanteng (江燦騰), began to redress this scarcity. His 'The Study of the History of Taiwanese Buddhism for the Past One Hundred Years: 1895-1995 (台灣佛教百年史之研究)' has become one of the most important sources of this study.<sup>5</sup>

The chapter consists of six sections. The first offers an outline of the history of Taiwan, defining the seven periods into which this history can be divided. Part two through five examines the evolving character of the different religions that comprise Taiwan's religious plurality, illustrating the various tendencies towards syncretism and pragmatism that recur in each of these religions, with the exception of Christianity. The final part of the chapter gives an analysis of the two polarities of Taiwanese pluralism. It also evaluates the historical data in terms of this chapter's hypothesis, mentioned above. Christianity has, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, identified itself against the plural and pragmatic traditions of Taiwanese religions in favour of an exclusivist and

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Presbyterian theologian, made great achievements in the study of the folk religions.

<sup>3</sup> These young scholars include Wang Jianchuan (王見川), Lin Benxuan (林本炫), Zheng Zhiming (鄭志明), Lee Shiwei (李世偉), and Lin Meirong (林美容).

<sup>4</sup> Among these publications, *One Hundred Years History of Presbyterian Church in Taiwan* (台灣基督長老教會百年史) edited by Zheng Liaming (鄭連明編) contains details of the churches' development, but it is restricted to the PCT. Thomas de la Hoze's (楊多默) *The One hundred Years of Dominican Apostolate in Taiwan* (天主教來台傳教百年簡史) contains a brief Catholic history in Taiwan. Dorothy Rober's *Protestantism in Changing Taiwan* mainly focuses on Mandarin Protestantism. Holington K. Tong's (董顯光) *Christianity in Taiwan: A History* covers the history of all three traditions.

<sup>5</sup> See Jiang Chanteng (江燦騰), *The Study of the History of Taiwanese Buddhism for the Past One Hundred Years: 1895-1995* (台灣佛教百年史之研究: 1895-1995). Other sources include Huiyang's (慧嚴) *The Early History of Taiwanese Buddhism* (台灣佛教史前期) and Yan Zhengzong's (閻正宗) *One Hundred Years of Taiwanese Buddhism* (台灣佛教一百年).

other-worldly theology, and consequently it is perceived as foreign to Taiwanese culture, and marginal to Taiwanese society.

### Historical Periods, Inhabitants, and Religions

The first section of this chapter briefly describes the historical setting, and main religious composition of Taiwan, which will set the background for later detailed descriptions in this chapter. Two historical and geographical features should first be taken into account. Taiwan, as an island geographically located to the southeast of China, has always had a complex relationship with China. It is influenced by Chinese heritages, while always standing on the fringe of Chinese culture, struggling to establish its own identity. Additionally, throughout its history, Taiwan has been ruled by different conquerors—Chinese and others,<sup>6</sup> each of which introduced new elements to the island's population. These features helped make Taiwan a multi-cultural and pluralist society. The following paragraphs of this section will describe Taiwan's historical setting, the main composition of its inhabitants, and will give a general overview of its religious composition.

#### Historical Periods

The transition of regimes marks Taiwan's different historical periods. The first period (from its first settlers to 12<sup>th</sup> century) is defined by the earliest Chinese historical records that can be traced back to the era of Three States,<sup>7</sup> when the aboriginal population maintained a relatively simple form of society. This began to change in the 12<sup>th</sup> century with the massive arrival of the Han people, fleeing the chaos of the Sung Dynasty (宋朝, 960-1279) and the Mongols' conquest of China.<sup>8</sup> During these earliest two periods, the Chinese government did not assert direct rule over Taiwan, but maintained an official presence in the island and began to record its history. The third period is marked by Taiwan's first experience of Western occupation. Portuguese explorers discovered the island in 1517 CE and subsequently led to its

<sup>6</sup> Throughout its history, Taiwan had been ruled by Dutch and Spanish, Chinese government--Ming and Qing Dynasty (明朝和清朝), Japan, and KMT government.

<sup>7</sup> There are divergent perspectives on the earliest records of Taiwan in Chinese official literature. The date mentioned here adopts the perspective of Cao Yonghe (曹永和), *The Expansion of Chinese and the Development of Taiwan* (中華民族的擴展和台灣的開發), in *The Full Story of the Historical Relics of Taiwan* (台灣史蹟源流), Liu Linyang (劉寧顏) ed., Taichung, Taiwan: The Documentary Committee of Taiwan Province (台灣台中: 台灣省文獻委員會), 1981, 120.

<sup>8</sup> Chen, Chilu (陳奇祿), *The Expansion of Chinese People in Taiwan* (中華民族在台灣的拓展) in *The Full Story of the Historical Relics of Taiwan*, Liu Linyang ed., Taichung, Taiwan: The Documentary Committee of Taiwan Province, 1981, 105.

occupation by the Dutch (1624-1662) and Spanish (1625-1642). In this third period, foreign explorers exploited Taiwan and its population by grabbing resources, pursuing unfair trading practices, and levying taxes.

The arrival of the Koxinga (鄭成功) in the 17<sup>th</sup> century ended Western occupation and marked the first period of Chinese rule (1662-1894) including the rule of Koxinga and of the Qing Dynasty (1684-1894). Koxinga was an official of the Ming Dynasty (明朝, 1368-1644). He withdrew to Taiwan and drove out the Dutch as the Ming Dynasty was replaced by the Qing Dynasty (清朝, 1644-1911). However, one year after his arrival in Taiwan, Koxinga died and his descendants surrendered rule to the Qing Dynasty in 1683 CE. During this period, Taiwan was formally under Chinese authority. Since many Han People followed Koxinga's retreat to Taiwan, the Han immigrant population gradually increased, as did contact between Taiwan and China.

The Qing Dynasty continued its rule of Taiwan until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when the first Sino-Japan war in 1895 CE forced China to cede Taiwan to Japan. This introduced the fifth period of Taiwanese history, during which the island experienced fifty years of Japanese occupation (1895-1945). Facing constant resistance from the Taiwanese people, the Japanese government used both military suppression and cultural assimilation to maintain its rule. Japanese cultural imposition was widespread: it reduced Taiwan's long assimilation to its Chinese heritage, and introduced a spirit of modernisation. The Japanese occupation continued until Japan's defeat in the second Sino-Japan war in 1945 CE. Taiwan now entered the sixth period of its history, the rule of the KMT (1945-1987). In 1949 CE, the KMT government retreated to Taiwan from China when it was defeated in the civil war with the Communists. In Taiwan the KMT government established a totalitarian regime which lasted about forty years; during the later period of the KMT regime, the economic development and pro- democratic movements eventually led to the lifting of the Martial Law in 1987 CE, which signified the beginning of the democratic era, the seventh period of the history of Taiwan.

The above seven historical periods were divided according to the transition of regimes in Taiwan. In order to properly express religious conditions and characteristics in Taiwan, the description of the religious development in this chapter will be divided into four sections: the period before Japanese occupation, Japanese occupation, the rule of the KMT, and the democratic period.



## Main Composition of the Inhabitants

### Aborigine

Taiwan was originally inhabited by indigenous peoples, commonly referred to as 'Mountain People (高山族),' but more accurately called the aborigines (原住民). They include ten tribes,<sup>9</sup> and currently number about 440,000.<sup>10</sup> There is no reliable document or convincing archaeological evidence about their origins to date.<sup>11</sup> As a minority people throughout Taiwanese history, the aborigines have experienced economic oppression and cultural assimilation by different conquerors, and their cultural and religious heritage has been largely destroyed.

### Han Taiwanese—Southern Fukien (閩南人) and Hakka (客家人)

The settlement of Han people in Taiwan began, as noted above, from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century: these first two groups came from Fukien (福建) and Gwangdong (廣東), two provinces in southeastern and southern China and are referred to as the Han Taiwanese. Their numbers greatly increased when Koxinga (鄭成功) occupied Taiwan in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. These Han Taiwanese brought folk beliefs and three Chinese traditional religions to Taiwan: Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Although these beliefs belong to Chinese heritage, after these Han immigrants had settled, each religion developed indigenous characteristics.

### New Han immigrants--Mainlander (外省人)

There was a further influx of Han people in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century with the retreat of the KMT from China to Taiwan. This more recent group of immigrants came from different parts of China, and to distinguish them from the Han Taiwanese, these new immigrants are usually called 'Mainlander.' Since the KMT government claimed to be the embodiment of orthodox Chinese culture, contrary to the mainland Communists, many of the governments' supporters among the new immigrants proudly affirmed their adherence to Confucianism.

<sup>9</sup> These ten tribes include The Taiya (泰雅), The Paiwans (排灣), The Bunu (布農), The Rukai (魯凱), The Beinan (卑南), The Zou (鄒), The Saishet (賽夏), The Ami (阿美), and the Shao (邵).

<sup>10</sup> This information is from the statistic of The Council of Indigenous Peoples, Executive Yuan (行政院原住民委員會), cited 31 October 2003, available from <http://www.apc.gov.tw/upload/govinfo>

<sup>11</sup> Different views of the origins of the Taiwanese aborigines are listed in Michael Stainton, *The Politics of Taiwan Aboriginal Origins in Taiwan: A New History*, Murray A. Rubinstein ed., Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1999, 27-44.

## Main Composition of Religions in Taiwan

The diverse composition of inhabitants contributes to the pluralistic religious society of Taiwan. Among these inhabitants, their beliefs can be classed into several groups. The first group is Han folk belief, which are the mainstay of popular Han Taiwanese and still comprises the major population of believers in Taiwan. The second group is of two traditional Chinese beliefs: Buddhism and Daoism. These two religions had been brought to Taiwan in the earlier period, but were mixed with elements of folk beliefs from the beginning. Throughout the Japanese and Nationalist periods, they gradually developed unique beliefs and institutions divergent from folk beliefs. The third group is religions originally from foreign western countries. Christianity, including the Catholic and Protestant branches, is the main representative of this group, having the largest population among these foreign religions. Islam was brought to Taiwan in 1949 CE by Chinese Muslims, decedents of the Hui people (回人) in northwestern China. This religion has maintained its ethnic belief structure, rarely being disseminated to other people. The fourth is composed at various sectarian traditions, which relate to traditional religions. Among them is the Vegetarian Sect (齋教), which is considered to be a Buddhist group because of its vegetarian practice, but has been disowned by the official Buddhist institution because it lacks a monastic system. Another is the Unity Sect (一貫道), which was founded in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in northern China and was introduced to Taiwan in 1940 CE.<sup>12</sup> The Unity Sect holds the belief that is a syncretistic combination of five religions (五教合一),<sup>13</sup> but this sect too was disowned by all five of these religions.<sup>14</sup> It was forbidden by the government in 1951 CE, but the ban was finally lifted in 1987 CE.<sup>15</sup> Although there are always debates about whether Confucianism is a religion, it has always been considered within the Chinese mainline value system, and is the belief of the Chinese elite. Furthermore, because of the advocacy of the KMT government, it stood as the

<sup>12</sup> Lin Benxuan (林本炫), *The Relationship between the Unity Sect and the Government—from Ban to Legalisation (一貫道與政府的關係—從查禁到合法化)* in *The Religion and Culture (宗教與文化)*, Zheng Zhiming ed. (鄭志明主編) Taipei, Taiwan: Taiwan Student Books (台灣學生書局), 1990, 315.

<sup>13</sup> These five religions include Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity, and Islam.

<sup>14</sup> Originally it claimed that its belief is the combination of three Chinese religions, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. Recently, Christianity and Islam were included into its belief system. Chiu Heiyuan (瞿海源), *The Consideration of the Relationship between the Religion and Politics (政教關的思考)* in *The Social and Political Analysis of the Change of Religions in Taiwan (台灣宗教變遷的社會政治分析)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Guiguan plc (台灣台北: 桂冠圖書公司), 1997, 351.

<sup>15</sup> Lin Benxuan, *The Political Procedure of Forbidding and Releasing The Unity Sect (查禁與解禁一貫道的政治過程)*, in *The Social and Political Analysis of the Change of Religions in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Guiguan plc, 1997, 362-363.

official value system in Taiwan from 1949 CE. Hence, it is considered by this thesis as the fifth group of Taiwanese religion here. The last is that of the tribal aboriginal beliefs. Although they have been destroyed because of the oppression of the Japanese colonialist government, these traditional beliefs of aborigine still influence Taiwanese lives and culture.

### **The Periods before the Japanese Occupation**

This section will describe the historical development of the main religious beliefs prior to Japanese occupation. These descriptions will especially show the two polarities of pragmatism and syncretism in Taiwanese indigenous religions. They will also show that as a religion introduced from foreign sources, Christianity did not adapt itself to these characteristics and is therefore not identified as a domestic belief. In the earlier period before the Japanese occupation, the main Taiwanese religious beliefs had already been introduced into Taiwan. These beliefs included the aboriginal tribal beliefs, Han folk beliefs, the three native Chinese beliefs intermixing with folk belief elements, and Christianity. Excepting Christianity, all these beliefs showed strong syncretistic and superstitious characteristics to be shown in this next section.

### **The Tribal Beliefs of the Aborigines**

The aborigine religions consist of multiple tribal beliefs. These beliefs symbolise the identity of every tribe and permeate every part of their people's lives. Each tribe possesses their distinctive belief systems, but holding some common characteristics. They worship their own distinct gods and have their own specific ritual practices. But, they all believe in one Creator, though named differently. They all developed tales about the creation of the world and about the origin of their tribes. They all worship a hierarchy of deities, ancestors, and ghosts. They all practice some set of rites, through which to they hope contact the spiritual world in order to guarantee the security and the abundance of their people's lives.

In the early period, the aborigines were left alone to their own beliefs without disturbance from the Han people. However, as mentioned, throughout different periods of Taiwanese history, these minority aborigines continuously experienced economic and cultural suppression from Han people, Western colonialists, and the Japanese. It is because of this that their religions and cultures were greatly destroyed and nearly died out.

## The Folk Beliefs of Han People

Folk beliefs were brought by Han immigrants from southeastern China and have been the common popular belief of Han Taiwanese. These beliefs include the worship of the gods, ancestors and ghosts; family and local rites; and a collection of mysterious practices such as divination (占卜) and geomagnetic omen (風水). These beliefs have typical characteristics that run throughout the past.

Primarily, folk beliefs in Taiwan were polytheistic; they possessed a hierarchy system of gods with numerous deities, of which the number was continuously increasing. From among this divine hierarchy, one might select one or several gods as one's main subjects of worship, without denying the existence of other gods. In the early period, the immigrants selected their subjects of worship from the gods of their hometowns.<sup>16</sup> In this way, the early immigrants reaffirmed their regional identities and these identities also acted as boundary between people from different hometowns.

The syncretistic character of folk beliefs is revealed in their mixing with the three Chinese traditional religions, Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Elements of the three Chinese religions were evident in the gods worshipped. The Confucian sages or the deities of the other two religions appeared as the worshipped subjects of folk beliefs, including both Confucius and Han Yu (韓愈) of Confucianism, Śākyamuni (釋迦牟尼佛) and Kuanyin (觀音菩薩) of Buddhism, and Laoze (太上老君) and Chan Heavenly Master (張天師) of Daoism.<sup>17</sup> Folk beliefs also incorporated other elements of the three religions: according to the analysis of Dong Fungyuan (董芳苑), these elements include filial piety and the ancestor worship of Confucianism, the pragmatism and mystic practices of Daoism, and the concept of merits and incarnation from Buddhism.<sup>18</sup> These various features show a folk belief system in the Han people, which are syncretised with the three Chinese religions.

In addition, folk beliefs in Taiwan were closely associated with the individual and community life of the early Han people. Such beliefs functioned to provide for their daily needs, especially by protecting their lives and, through prayer, encouraging the harvest of their efforts. Folk beliefs also provided moral restraints upon individuals

<sup>16</sup> Chiu Heiyuan, *Folk Religion in Taiwan* (台灣的民間信仰) in *The Social and Political Analysis of the Change of Religions in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Guiguan plc, 1997, 142, and Dong Fangyuan (董芳苑), *Taiwanese Folk Religion* (台灣民間宗教信仰), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Taipei, Taiwan: Evergreen plc (長青文化), 1984, 155.

<sup>17</sup> Zhong Huachau (鍾華操), *The Origin of the Gods in Taiwan* (台灣地區神明的由來), Taichung, Taiwan: The Documentary Committee of Taiwan Province, 1979, 65, 84, 110, 212, 272, and 311.

<sup>18</sup> Dong Fangyuan (董芳苑), *Taiwanese Folk Religion* (台灣民間宗教信仰), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Taipei, Taiwan: Evergreen plc (長青文化), 1984, 142-144.

and the community. These beliefs maintained the people's connection to Chinese hometowns and help bond those people from the same places. Moreover, they provided the daily ethical norms, which governed people's lives and maintained the fibre of the community. These pragmatic functions of religion were the second important functional characteristic for the beliefs of these pioneers.

Chiu Heiyuan (瞿海源), a sociologist of religion in Taiwan, calls folk beliefs in Taiwan diffused beliefs.<sup>19</sup> In this, he means that folk religion in Taiwan lacks a strong and systematic ideology. Its ideology is usually closely related to the context.<sup>20</sup> When the context changes, folk beliefs typically follow-suit by reinterpreting the contents or significance of their ideology.<sup>21</sup> In China, the moral norms of folk beliefs mainly originated from the three traditional religions, especially Confucianism. When the moral characteristics of traditional religions exercised a strong influence over a country, local folk beliefs provide focused positive restraint people's lives. Therefore, the influences of the institutional religions played the important role of providing the moral norms for folk beliefs so that these religions might have a positive effect to their followers and the society.

The aforementioned characteristics of Taiwanese folk beliefs show that they contained pragmatic functions, which not only provided for the immediate needs of people but for moral restraint for their daily lives. Furthermore, these beliefs had strong syncretistic characteristics, which not only contained polytheistic concepts but also mixed elements of the three traditional Chinese religions. Throughout Taiwanese history, these two characteristics have always been inherent to its folk beliefs.

### Three Chinese Traditional Religions

Along with the emergence and preimminence of folk beliefs, the three major Chinese religions were also brought to Taiwan in this period. In this primary stage of their introduction, these religions mixed with both the elements of folk beliefs and with each other. Unlike the folk beliefs, which became the most popular beliefs of the Han people, there was only a minority of believers in the three religions.

#### Daoism

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<sup>19</sup> Chiu Heiyuan, *Folk Religion in Taiwan* (台灣的民間信仰) in *The Social and Political Analysis of the Change of Religions in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Guiguan plc, 1997, 141.

<sup>20</sup> Robert P. Weller, *Unities and Diversity in Chinese Religions*, London: The Macmillan Press Ltd Seattle, 1987, 22, 55.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.



Daoist religion (道教) is different from the Daoist philosophy (道家) founded by Laozi (老子). This religion emerged from Daoist philosophy in East Han in about the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC due to the impact of the introduction of Buddhism to China. It adopted the Daoist philosophy's concept and the practices of Ying Yang (陰陽) and the mystic elements of Chinese folk beliefs. Current Daoist religion in Taiwan belongs to the 'Zheng Yi Sect (正乙教),' which was founded by Chang Heaven Master (張天師) and focuses specifically on the mystic cults, through which its followers can acquire this-worldly benefits.<sup>22</sup>

There is no record of the arrival of the Daoist religion during the period of early Taiwanese history. Since Daoist belief is sometimes hard to distinguish from folk religion, it is supposed that Daoist belief arrived around the same time. The official institution of the Zheng Yi Sect did not arrive until the Nationalist period though: its pragmatic character and intermixture with folk beliefs shows it contains two typical religious characteristics of folk beliefs in this period.

### Buddhism

Although there is no reliable record when Buddhism arrived in Taiwan, the fact that the earliest Buddhist temples in Taiwan were built immediately after the occupation of Koxinga<sup>23</sup> proves the archeological evidence that there were already a certain number of Buddhists in Taiwan. The lineage of early Taiwanese Buddhism belonged to the Chan School of southern China, including Linji and Caodong Sects (臨濟宗和曹洞宗).<sup>24</sup>

Historians note several distinctions in early Taiwanese Buddhism. Firstly, its practice was a syncretism of Chan and Pure Land, meditation and calling name of Buddha, which had been the main practices of Chinese Buddhism since the Sung Dynasty.<sup>25</sup> These practices were considered to possess the strong characteristic of renouncing the material world. Taiwanese Buddhism was, at that time, distant from the origin of its lineage, which was in Fukien and the distance prevented the monks and lay believers from obtaining a sound religious education. This limitation prevented

<sup>22</sup> Dong Fangyuan, *Taiwanese Folk Religion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Taipei, Taiwan: Evergreen plc, 1984, 143.

<sup>23</sup> These three earliest Buddhist temples are Zhushih (竹溪寺), Midah (彌陀寺), and Longhuyang (龍湖巖). See Huiyang (慧嚴), *The Early History of Taiwanese Buddhism* (台灣佛教史前期), *Chuang-Hwa Academic Journal of Buddhist Study* (中華佛學學報), July 1995, 275-288.

<sup>24</sup> In her essays, Huiyang lists three Japanese and Taiwanese scholars, who support this perspective. *Ibid.*, 290.

<sup>25</sup> Gu Weikang (顧偉康), *Survey of the Syncretism of Chan and Pure Land* (禪淨合一流略), Taipei, Taiwan: Dongdah Books (台灣台北:東大圖書), 1997, 1.



Taiwanese Buddhism from protecting the orthodoxy of its belief and practice,<sup>26</sup> resulting in the third definitive characteristic of Taiwanese Buddhism: its intermixture with the polytheistic elements of folk beliefs.<sup>27</sup> In general, Taiwanese Buddhism in this period was in a primal stage and contained mystical, polytheistic, and superstitious elements.

### Confucianism

The debate continues about the exact nature and definition of Confucianism.<sup>28</sup> Some scholars maintain that it can only be called an ethical system due to its lack elemental divinity;<sup>29</sup> others considered it to be the civil religion of China and eagerly advocated setting up Confucianism as the Chinese national religion in the early republican period.<sup>30</sup> Although there is no agreement on the issue, this system has always been the belief system of the Chinese elite, and the mainline value system in China. Two rites specifically cause Confucianism to be considered China's civil religion. The first was Emperor's Heaven Worship during the imperial period. The second was the worship of Confucius, which is still maintained by the KMT government.

The Koxinga and Qing governments built Confucian temples and started Confucian worship in Taiwan. These constructions and rites signified that the government advocated the value of Confucianism.<sup>31</sup> Confucian beliefs co-existed with the advocacy of Chinese culture in local Confucian groups such as the literary club (文社), the poem club (詩社), and the charity hall (善堂).<sup>32</sup> Although these groups were still in their infancy at this period, the moral principles of Confucianism had, to a certain degree, influenced the value system of Han Taiwanese.

<sup>26</sup> Yan Zhengzong (閻正宗), *One Hundred Years of Taiwanese Buddhism* (台灣佛教一百年), Taipei, Taiwan: Dongdah Books, 1999, 242.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>28</sup> The Taiwanese scholar, Lee Shiwei (李世偉) lists various views of modern scholars on this issue in Lee Shiwei, *The Review and Expectation of Contemporary Confucian Study* (近代儒學研究的回顧與展望) in Wang Jianchuan (王見川) and Lee Shiwei, *Taiwanese Religions and Cultures* (台灣宗教與文化), Luzhou, Taiwan: Boy Young (台灣蘆洲:博揚文化), 1999, 254.

<sup>29</sup> In China the scholars that denied Confucianism as a religion were mainly scholars of May Fourth New Culture Movement (五四新文化運動), such as Tsai Yuanpei (蔡元培), Hu Shi (胡適), and Chen Dushiu (陳獨秀). Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> The elite who advocated setting up Confucianism as the national religion of China include Kang Yuwei (康有為) and Yan Fu (嚴復). Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Lee Shiwei, *Taiwanese Confucian Movements in the Period of Japanese Occupation* (日據時代的台灣儒教運動), in the *Religions and Cultures in Taiwan* (台灣的宗教與文化), Wang Jianchuan and Lee Shiwei, Luzhou, Taiwan: Boy Young (台灣蘆洲:博揚文化), 1999, 174.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 154.

### The Introduction of Christianity

Christian mission in Taiwan started during the Dutch and Spanish occupation, through the Reformed and Dominican missionaries. During the period of Western occupation, these missionaries baptised 10,000 inhabitants and built several churches.<sup>33</sup> However, after both the Dutch and Spanish had been driven out, both missions left little vestige and the churches died out. The underlying factor in the disappearance of the early Christian mission was the confusion amongst the missionaries as to the role of religion and business. This caused the missionaries to become entangled too much with the economies of their Western governments rather than with the spiritual and social wellbeing of their subjects.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, since the motivation for conversion was tied to the acquisition of material gains, the local people possessed little religious enthusiasm.<sup>35</sup> The missionaries ignored efforts towards the indigenisation of the churches, and so the local believers did not acquire sufficient training in ministry and were unable to take on the duties of leading the churches. These factors caused the indigenous Christians to lack a strong core of belief. Therefore, after the missionaries withdrew, they could not succeed in the churches' ministries.<sup>36</sup>

In 1858 CE, Christian missions restarted, because the treaty of the Qing Dynasty with Great Britain and France forced China to accept access for foreigners and the preaching of the gospel in certain regions of China. This brought about the return of the Christian mission in Taiwan, but also caused Christianity to be identified with Western imperialism. The Taiwanese government and people therefore strongly objected to the Christian mission.

It was around this time, that the both Dominican and Presbyterian missions came to Taiwan. These missions started two important Christian traditions: the Catholic Church in Taiwan (CCT) and the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT). The two missions adopted a similar strategy, which was witnessing to God's grace and love by

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<sup>33</sup> Rev. Jas. Johnston, *China and Formosa: The Story of the Mission of the Presbyterian Church of England*, London: Hazel, Watson, & Viney, LD. 1897, 166, and Holington K. Tong, *Christianity in Taiwan: A History*, Taipei, Taiwan: China Post, 1972, 207.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> The editing group of 'Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,' *Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan* (認識台灣基督長老教會), rev. ed., Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2000, 7, and Dorothy A. Rober, *Protestantism in Changing Taiwan: A Call to Creative Response*, South Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1978, 25.

caring for human needs.<sup>37</sup> They placed evangelisation as the priority of ministry, and made social ministries, including charity, medical aid, and education as secondary.<sup>38</sup> Although these social works opened up the door of evangelisation and made great contributions to the modernisation and social reformation of Taiwan, there were objections and persecutions from both the government and the Taiwanese people. Besides, the fact that Christian churches were viewed as foreign and were identified with Western imperialism,<sup>39</sup> and coupled with the exclusive Christian attitude towards domestic religions and the forbidding of the practices of ancestor worship by believers caused the arousal of local hostility.<sup>40</sup>

## Conclusion

The above analysis has shown that, except for aboriginal tribal beliefs, the main beliefs brought by the Han immigrants were Chinese folk traditions. These folk beliefs presented pragmatic and syncretistic characteristics. Besides these popular beliefs, the three Chinese religions had been brought to Taiwan during this period but were still in an early stage and in loose states that mixed with the elements of other beliefs systems. In general, superstitious elements and syncretistic character were popular in these domestic religions. Christian beliefs were later introduced by foreign missionaries during this period. Christianity was viewed as a foreign religion and was identified as an extension Western invader, and even though Christian social ministries made great contributions to the welfare and modernisation of Taiwan, the Church still could not avoid persecution and opposition.

## The Period of the Japanese Occupation

China ceded Taiwan to Japan in 1895 CE because of its defeat in the first Sino-Japan War. In facing this new foreign regime, except for some direct political resistances, most of the people had to make an adaptation between their original

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<sup>37</sup> The editing group of 'Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,' *Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, rev. ed., Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2000, 9.

<sup>38</sup> Dorothy A. Rober, *Protestantism in Changing Taiwan: A Call to Creative Response*, South Pasadena, California, William Carey Library, 1978, 40 and Thomas de la Hoe, *One hundred Years of Dominican Apotolate in Taiwan*, Chen Zhialu translated from Japanese edition, Zuoying, Taiwan: Zuoying Catholic Chapel, 1960, 23.

<sup>39</sup> The editing group of 'Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,' *Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, rev. ed., Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2000, 14.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Chinese identity and the new rule. Dealing with the first official colony that gave continuous military resistance, the Japanese government took two actions to maintain their rule and transform this new territory into a part of Japan. They used military force and a police inspection system to suppress the resistance, and they attempted to assimilate the Taiwanese people into Japanese culture. During this fifty year period, the Japanese government took different actions regarding Taiwanese religions in their different stages, in their efforts towards cultural assimilation.

### **The Cultural Assimilation of Colonial Government**

Japanese efforts towards cultural assimilation were three-fold. At the beginning of Japanese occupation, the colonial government took a friendly attitude to religion and worked towards cultural assimilation purely through Japanese religious groups. However, a military resistance initiated by religious groups associated with the Shi Lai Temple (西來庵) in 1915 CE caused the colonial government to recognise the importance of controlling religions so as to prevent political resistance. Therefore, they ordered the registration of all religious organisations and urged the establishment of national religious institutes. The control of religions became more severe after the 1930s, when Japan prepared to invade Asia. All the religious groups in Taiwan were forced to become implements of the Japanese invasion. They were forced to propagate Shinto beliefs and Japanese militarism so as to guarantee the loyalty of the Taiwanese people. The original cultural assimilation was distorted by this political enforcement.

Religious scholar Jiang Chanteng (江燦騰) points out that the push for religious assimilation from the Japanese government and its religions operated on two levels. The first was to distance Taiwanese religions away from their Chinese identity towards a Japanese one. Jiang maintains that this attempt was not very effective, and its influences quickly passed after the end of Japanese occupation.<sup>41</sup> Besides these attempts at Japanisation, Jiang states that the Japanese spirit of modernisation, which was absorbed from Western culture during the period of Meiji restoration, greatly impacted Taiwanese religions and helped with their modernisation.<sup>42</sup> The success of these influences were quantified by the reduction of superstitious elements, and caused the religions to pay more attention to their responsibility in promoting the this-worldly welfare of their people. The following paragraphs will present how this cultural

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<sup>41</sup> Jiang Chanteng, *Swaying between Colonisation and Decolonisation: The Transition of Taiwanese Buddhism in the Last One Hundred Years* (徘徊在殖民化與去殖民化之間: 台灣本土佛教近百年來的變革滄桑史), Contemporary (當代), 173, January 2002: 16.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

assimilation influenced the development of Taiwanese religions by describing the development of different beliefs in this period.

### **The Tribal Beliefs of the Aborigines**

Since the beginning of their occupation, the Japanese took severe action to establish their complete dominance over the aborigines. This was done to cement their holding on aboriginal economic profits, such as the camphor production in the mountain areas that account for 70-80% of the world's supply.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, the Japanese viewed the aborigines as uncivilised and considered harsh treatment the best policy to control them and to change their cruel customs. Besides building a 360 mile-long fence around the mountain areas, stationing a 5,000-man-army, and assigning numerous police to each tribe,<sup>44</sup> the Japanese enforced Japanese culture and Shinto worship so as to replace original tribal culture and beliefs.<sup>45</sup> Under such policies, the aboriginal cultures and tribal beliefs suffered great destruction, so that much of these heritages nearly died out.

### **The Folk Beliefs of Han People**

As with the tribal beliefs, the colonial government also took action to suppress the folk beliefs of the Han people. The government took a discriminative stance against folk beliefs for two reasons. The first being that the occupying government viewed the mystic elements of folk beliefs as superstition and a roadblock to the modernisation of society: they did not want these beliefs to remain popular in Taiwan.<sup>46</sup> The second and related reason is that since the Shi Lai rebellion was the first political resistance initiated by a religious group,<sup>47</sup> the Japanese government considered it necessary to control religious development. This rebellion reminded the government that in Chinese history, political resistance was usually related to some folk beliefs of the society. Therefore, after the Shi Lai incident, the government put many temples

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<sup>43</sup> Lin, April C. & Jerome F. Keating, *Island in the Stream: A Quick Case Study of Taiwan's Complex History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Taipei Taiwan: SMC Publishing Inc, 2001, 52.

<sup>44</sup> Holington K. Tong, *Christianity in Taiwan: A History*, Taipei, Taiwan: China Post, 1972, 139.

<sup>45</sup> The editing group of 'Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,' *Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, rev. ed., Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2000, 19.

<sup>46</sup> Lee Shiwei, *Taiwanese Confucian Movements in the Period of Japanese Occupation*, in the *Religions and Cultures in Taiwan*, Wang Zhianchuan and Lee Shiwei, Luzhou, Taiwan: Boy Young, 1999, 211.

<sup>47</sup> Wang Zhianchuan, *The Relationship between Shi Lai Incident and Daoism and Luan Hall*, in the *Religions and Cultures in Taiwan*, Wang Zhianchuan and Lee Shiwei, Luzhou, Taiwan: Boy Young, 1999, 309-336.



dedicated to folk beliefs under inspection and in many cases forced their closure. Although the folk beliefs declined because of these suppressions, they were so deeply rooted in Taiwanese society that they continued to have great influences in the popular level of the culture.

## Buddhism

Unlike the folk and aboriginal tribal beliefs, the development of Buddhism in Taiwan during the Japanese occupation was encouraged, thereby accelerating great progress. During this period, four sub-groups emerged from the same lineage-the Yongchian Temple in Gu Mountain, Fukien (福建鼓山湧泉寺),<sup>48</sup> and through these four groups numerous temples were established. Buddhism in Taiwan was in a delicate relationship with Chinese and Japanese Buddhism. On the one hand, important Buddhist leaders still went to Yongchian temple to accept the 'the Delivery of Dharma and Vinaya (傳法傳戒)' so as to show that they were successor of the lineage of the Chinese Chan School.<sup>49</sup> On the other, the arrival of Japanese Buddhism brought new influences on these temples.

The previous paragraph had mentioned the Japanese policy of cultural assimilation with regard to religions in Taiwan. In the first stage, the Japanese government only introduced Japanese Buddhism so as to transform Taiwanese Buddhism through its advanced doctrinal development. At this time, the assimilation was gentle and Taiwanese Buddhists only gave passive responses.<sup>50</sup> The people who led the 'Shi Lai Temple' rebellion were misclassified as they belonged to the Vegetarian Sect, which was considered to be closely related to Buddhism.<sup>51</sup> This caused panic in Taiwanese Buddhists and forced them to make some changes. The first was that under the guidance of Japanese government and Buddhism, Taiwanese Buddhism established a national Buddhist organisation, the Nanying Buddhist Association (南瀛佛教會) giving legitimacy to the rest. Furthermore, in order not to

<sup>48</sup> These four groups are Yuemei Mountain Linquan Temple (月眉山靈泉寺), Dahu Fayun Temple (大湖法雲寺), Guanyin Mountain Linyun Temple (觀音山凌雲寺), and Dagang Mountain Chaofeng Temple (大崗山超峰寺). See Yan Zhengzong (閻正宗), *One Hundred Years of Taiwanese Buddhism* (台灣佛教一百年). Taipei, Taiwan: Dongdah Books, 1999, 246-251.

<sup>49</sup> Wang Jianchuan, *The Identity and Choice of Taiwanese Buddhism in the Japanese Occupation* (日據時期台灣佛教的認同與選擇), in Wang Jianchuan and Lee Shiwei, *Taiwanese Religions and Cultures*, Luzhou, Taiwan: Boy Young, 1999, 32-36.

<sup>50</sup> Jiang Chanteng, *Swaying between Colonisation and Decolonisation: The Transition of Taiwanese Buddhism in the Last One Hundred Years*, *Contemporary*, 173, January 2002, 16.

<sup>51</sup> Jiang Chanteng, *The Study of the History of Taiwanese Buddhism for the Past One Hundred Years: 1895-1995* (台灣佛教百年史之研究: 1895-1995), Taipei, Taiwan: Nantian Books, 1996, 111.



come under government suspicion, Taiwanese Buddhist temples eagerly joined with Japanese Buddhist Chan Sects so as to seek protection under them. These two responses brought Taiwanese Buddhism into closer interactions with Japanese Buddhism.

Jiang Chanteng indicates that although these measures were motivated by the intention of cultural assimilation and political control, they helped Taiwanese Buddhism to absorb a more Japanese Buddhist essence.<sup>52</sup> He asserts that this influence was greatly helpful to Taiwanese Buddhism in terms of its understanding of orthodox Buddhist belief in reducing the folk elements of superstition, and inspiring Buddhists to pay more attention to the value of the present world.<sup>53</sup> Although this influence on Buddhist reformation decreased after the retrocession of Taiwan, it still laid fertile ground for later reformation in Taiwanese Buddhism.

### Christianity

As with Buddhism, the Japanese government also encouraged the development of Christianity. Besides the fact that Christianity was considered to be a rational religion, the Japanese government did not hold suspicions against it because of its western foreign origin and policy of keeping away from political association. Before 1930 CE, Christian churches had a good relationship with the government and kept on growing in both church development and social works ministries. However, the relationship between the churches and the government once again caused the Christian mission to be identified with a foreign invasion, and stirred up opposition in the people, who widely objected to Japanese rule.<sup>54</sup>

The attitude of the government to Christianity changed in the 1930s. To enforce its control of all the religious groups, the Japanese government took a hostile attitude towards religions with foreign relationships. As a result, all the missionaries were either forced to leave<sup>55</sup> or put under detention after 1940 CE.<sup>56</sup> Christians were forced to do things that ran contrary to their beliefs and their Chinese identity such as performing worship to the distant Royal Palace, and singing the Japanese national

<sup>52</sup> Jiang Chanteng, *Swaying between Colonisation and Decolonisation: The Transition of Taiwanese Buddhism in the Last One Hundred Years*, Contemporary, 173, January 2002: 18.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas de la Hoze, *One Hundred Years of Dominican Apostolate in Taiwan*, Chen Zhialu translated from Japanese edition, Zuoying, Taiwan: Zuoying Catholic Chapel, 1960, 22 and Holington K. Tong, *Christianity in Taiwan: A History*, Taipei, Taiwan: China Post, 1972, 211.

<sup>55</sup> Holington K. Tong, *Christianity in Taiwan: A History*, Taipei, Taiwan: China Post, 1972, 262.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas de la Hoze, *One Hundred Years of Dominican Apostolate in Taiwan*, Chen Zhialu translated from Japanese edition, Zuoying, Taiwan: Zuoying Catholic Chapel, 1960, 26.

anthem during Sunday worship.<sup>57</sup> These actions also caused the temporary decline of the churches during the 1940s.

### Confucianism

Although the official Confucian rites stopped after the cession of Taiwan to Japan, local Confucian beliefs showed vitality in this period. The basic factor for this development was the sense of crisis in Chinese culture because of the Japanese cultural assimilation and the challenge of modernisation.<sup>58</sup> Lee Shiwei (李世偉) comments that more local Confucian activities were emerging. These activities could be divided into intellectual groups and religious groups. The intellectual groups included the literary club and the poem club, through which the Confucian moral norms and the Han culture were propagated. The religious groups included the charity hall and the luan hall (鸞堂).<sup>59</sup> And, although these Confucian activities were motivated by the desire to revive Chinese culture the Japanese government did not object to them, except for the luan hall, which was considered to be advocating the superstitious elements of folk belief.<sup>60</sup> One possible reason for this tolerance was that Japan itself was greatly influenced by Confucianism, so that it was not considered to be completely against the tasks of Japanisation. Furthermore, the Japanese government did not consider these activities to hold the possibility of arousing political resistance. It is for these reasons that, though under Japanese rule, Confucian beliefs were popular and played a role in regulating moral norms and keeping Chinese culture in Taiwanese society.

### Conclusion

This analysis of religious conditions shows that in this period, the new social

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<sup>57</sup> Xu Qianxin (徐謙信), *Presbyterian Church in Taiwan in the Period of World War Two*, (二次大戰期間之台灣基督長老教會), in *One Hundred Years History of Presbyterian Church in Taiwan* (台灣基督長老教會百年史), Zheng Liaming ed., Taipei, Taiwan: The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 1965, 256.

<sup>58</sup> Lee Shiwei, *Taiwanese Confucian Movements in the Period of Japanese Occupation*, in the *Religions and Cultures in Taiwan*, Wang Zhianchuan and Lee Shiwei, Luzhou, Taiwan: Boy Young, 1999, 153.

<sup>59</sup> The original meaning of luan (鸞) is 'the deity's sedan chair.' Its meaning is therefore extended to the presence of the deities. 'Fu luan' in the Taiwanese folk beliefs means the rites in which the deities are present and the spiritual mediums deliver the oracle of these deities. These oracles therefore become the deities' moral teachings and the moral norms of the people. In luan hall, these oracles were basically the Confucian teachings.

<sup>60</sup> Lee Shiwei, *Taiwanese Confucian Movements in the Period of Japanese Occupation*, in *Religions and Cultures in Taiwan*, Wang Zhianchuan and Lee Shiwei, Luzhou, Taipei, Taiwan: Boy Young, 1999, 156.

context and the policies of the Japanese government caused the rise and fall of different beliefs. All the beliefs containing superstitious elements or were considered to hold the possibility of bringing about political resistance were suppressed by the Japanese government. Although there is no apparent evidence that the colonial government aimed at suppressing beliefs containing syncretistic elements, these beliefs declined because they usually contained many superstitious ones. This policy therefore forced folk and tribal beliefs into a decline in this period. Conversely, institutional beliefs such as Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity were encouraged by the government and acquired better progress because they were considered to hold moral value and a contribution to social welfare. In general, syncretistic characteristics were suppressed and separate beliefs in their orthodox forms were encouraged. The pragmatic characteristic evolved to focus on a religious consideration of the welfare of the whole society. Beliefs with stronger moral ideology and a contribution to the present world were encouraged, rather than beliefs that encouraged people to seek the satisfaction of their immediate needs.

### **The Nationalist Period**

#### **Social and Political Situation**

The period of the Nationalist regime spanned from the retrocession of Taiwan in 1945 CE to the lifting of martial law in 1987 CE. New economic and social conditions brought new factors to the development of Taiwanese religions. The retreat of the KMT government from the Mainland brought Taiwan about 1.5 million mainlanders as a new immigrant class. Along with these new mainlanders came many new religious groups such as Mandarin Christian denominations and Islamic groups from northwestern China. Some Chinese national leaders of the institutional religions, which had already been in Taiwan, also retreated with the KMT. Their arrivals not only strengthened these religious groups in Taiwan, but also changed their institutional structures. It should be noted that Confucianism regained its position as the majority value system, as the KMT government needed to establish both the Chinese identity of Taiwan and the legitimacy of its regime by advocating Chinese culture and Confucian values. Indeed, in order to ensure the survival of its regime, the KMT government was very cautious about controlling the religions so as to prevent political resistance from them. Instead of using the strategy of suppression, the government controlled the religious groups by setting up a registry<sup>61</sup> and by helping government-loyal religious

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<sup>61</sup> In this period, religions without registration were considered illegal.

leaders, to acquire the leadership of their respective groups. Although under a totalitarian system, Taiwan experienced economic growth and social stability during this period. The rise of people's material wealth and increased opportunities for higher education caused the society to shift people's expectations with regards to religious pragmatism.<sup>62</sup>

### **The Vicissitude of the Religions**

Since 1945 CE, there were vicissitudes among the religions in Taiwan. In 1945, about 92% of Taiwanese were reported believers in folk beliefs and sectarian traditions.<sup>63</sup> The number of Christians was only 60,000, which was less than 1% of the whole population.<sup>64</sup> Except for the tribal beliefs adherents of 200,000 aborigines, other beliefs including Chinese traditional religions and those with no religious affiliation were estimated at 4% of the population. From 1945 to the 1960s, Christianity experienced speedy growth. The number of members jumped from 60,000 to 540,000, representing 4.5% of the whole population.<sup>65</sup> After that period, the growth of Christianity declined because of the change of social and political situations. Their total numbers have kept to 5% of the population. Chinese traditional religions, Daoism and Buddhism, had only restricted growth in the 1970s though afterward, Buddhist followers speedily grew.<sup>66</sup> The general vicissitude of the religions mentioned above illustrates the religious condition in the 1980s. Based on his empirical study, Chiu Heiyuan lists the statistics of religious population in Taiwan: Folk beliefs is 65 %, Buddhism 11%, those with no religious affiliation 9%<sup>67</sup>, Daoism 7%, Christianity 5.2%, Islam 0.1%, and others (tribal beliefs and other sectarian) 3%.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Chiu Heiyuan, *The Exploration to the Change of Religious Situation in Taiwan* (台灣地區宗教變遷之探討) in *The Social and Political Analysis of the Change of Religions in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Guiguan plc, 1997, 70-71.

<sup>63</sup> Yu Kuanghorng (余光弘), *The Development of the Folk Religion in Taiwan* (台灣地區民間宗教的發展) in *The Social and Political Analysis of the Change of Religions in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Guiguan plc, 1997, 620.

<sup>64</sup> Dorothy A. Rober, *Protestantism in Changing Taiwan: A Call to Creative Response*, South Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1978, 73.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Chiu Heiyuan, *The Exploration to the Change of Religious Situation in Taiwan* in *The Social and Political Analysis of the Change of Religions in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Guiguan plc, 1997, 54.

<sup>67</sup> Basically the followers of Confucianism belong to this group because its followers usually did not claim themselves to have any religious affiliation.

<sup>68</sup> Chiu Heiyuan, *The Religious Belief and Attitude of Taiwanese People* (台灣民眾的宗教信仰與宗教態度) in *The Social and Political Analysis of the Change of Religions in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Guiguan plc, 1997, 34.

## Confucianism

The KMT's retreat to Taiwan led to Confucianism becoming the official value system in Taiwan. Since Confucianism had become the predominant force in Chinese culture during the Han Dynasty (漢朝, BCE 206—220 CE), subsequent dynasties reaffirmed the legitimacy of their regimes by claiming Confucianism as the national value system. These regimes also used Confucian values to maintain political and social stability. Holding a similar approach, the KMT government, while facing the crisis of a finished regime, advocated the revival of Confucianism. Furthermore, sensing the crisis of an eroding Chinese culture, many scholars of Neo-Confucianism also enthusiastically promoted the revival of Confucianism in Taiwan. At that time, Confucianism had become the official mainstay belief system in Taiwan. The Taiwanese elite, whether Han Taiwanese or mainlanders, liked to proclaim themselves followers of Confucianism. And, it was during the period of Nationalist rule, that Confucianism also played the role of restraint in the moral ethos of folk beliefs.

## The Aborigines

The suppression of the aboriginal culture during the Japanese occupation caused the aboriginal beliefs to diminish almost to extinction cultural heritages. After the withdrawal of the Japanese, the beliefs systems of the aborigines were almost in a vacuum and the KMT government neither respected nor sought to preserve these aboriginal cultures. At this time, the Christian mission entered and filled their religious void. Christian missions experienced great success among the aborigines in the 1950s. The percentage of the Christian population among aborigines exploded up to 70%<sup>69</sup> and this growth was thence called 'the miracle of Christian mission in twentieth century.'<sup>70</sup> The crucial reasons for this growth was the Christian missions' show of sympathy for the aborigine's difficult economic and social situation, and their compassion and aid stirred a positive response from the aborigines. However, in the early stages, few churches showed respect for the aboriginal culture. It was not until the 1980s that some Christian clergy and theologians started to work on the dialogue between Christianity and the tribal beliefs.

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<sup>69</sup> Holington K. Tong, *Christianity in Taiwan: A History*, Taipei, Taiwan: China Post, 1972, 137.

<sup>70</sup> The editing group of 'Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,' *Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, revised, Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2000, 19-22.



## The Han Folk Beliefs

The above religious population statistics have showed that folk beliefs in Taiwan continuously decreased. One reason for this drop is that the KMT government tended to encourage the institutional religions as opposed to folk beliefs. According to Chiu Heiyuan, the elevation of people's education also caused Taiwanese people to tend to follow beliefs with more rational structures.<sup>71</sup> But aside from the population of decrease, folk beliefs presented specific features to this period.

Throughout their history, folk beliefs in Taiwan have experienced changes in their worshipped deities. The previous section mentioned that in the beginning, people's subjects of worshipping subjects were brought from their Chinese hometowns.<sup>72</sup> Later, these subjects gradually changed to reflect identity in their current dwelling places so that their beliefs would protect their present resident places and unify their community.<sup>73</sup> In these two stages, the believers' loyalty to local gods and the moral restraint from the community brought positive functions to the immediate society and to people's lives. However, after modern economic growth and urbanisation, people began to choose their worshipping subjects mainly for meeting their material and personal needs.<sup>74</sup> Folk beliefs had become a service for providing the solution to believers' needs or desires in the form of commercial contracts between gods and believers. Such changes caused the community to lose its restraint, and moral norms had gradually disappeared in these religious behaviors.

Additionally, folk beliefs in Taiwan had been closely tied to politics. This relation was based on the ideology that the hierarchy of gods in folk beliefs is parallel to that of Chinese political bureaucrats.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, the concept of the venerating of gods could be applied to obeying the current political system, whether it is good or bad. In the early stage of this period, the KMT government manipulated this concept to control the grass roots level of the society. In keeping with it, the local KMT political elite was actively involved in folk beliefs so as to obtain the leadership of temples, through

<sup>71</sup> Chiu Heiyuan, *The Religious Belief and Attitude of Taiwanese People in The Social and Political Analysis of the Change of Religions in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Guiguan plc, 1997, 13-15.

<sup>72</sup> Chiu Heiyuan, *Folk Religion in Taiwan (台灣的民間信仰)* in *The Social and Political Analysis of the Change of Religions in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Guiguan plc, 1997, 142, and Dong Fangyuan, *Taiwanese Folk Religion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Taipei, Taiwan: Evergreen plc, 1984, 155.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Chiu Heiyuan, *Folk Religion in Taiwan* in *The Social and Political Analysis of the Change of Religions in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Guiguan plc., 1997, 142; Dong Fangyuan, *Taiwanese Folk Religion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Taipei, Taiwan: Evergreen plc, 1984, 150; and Stephan Feuchtwang, *Popular Religion in China: The Imperial Metaphor*, Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001, 4.

<sup>75</sup> Robert P. Weller, *Unities and Diversity in Chinese Religions*, Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1987, 38-40.



which they help the government to control the common people while helping themselves obtain political positions.<sup>76</sup> In the beginning, when democracy was implemented only at the local level and the KMT government entirely controlled politics, the collaboration of local politicians and local religious institution had little corruption. However, as Taiwan gradually moved towards democratisation, such collaboration caused greater corruption in both the religious and political institutions. Politicians made efforts to seize the leadership of temples not because of religious piety out of political ambition. Temples were willing to support political parties or politicians in election regardless of whether or not they could benefit the people. Illegal cooperation happened frequently in this collaboration and became a factor in the current corruption and chaos of Taiwan's political condition.

These features of folk beliefs show that their lack of ideology made their contribution to society variable depending upon the particular context. In the early stage of KMT rule, Confucianism could morally restrain folk beliefs and helped them provide a positive function for the community. Then, gradually, as society moved forward to materialism and Confucianism lost its influence, folk beliefs augmented the corruptibility of and contributed to the upheaval of society.

### **Buddhism**

The direct influence of Buddhism in Taiwan was the changing of its leadership and a whole religion returning towards a withdrawn tendency, to pull away from the 'this-world'. Supported by the KMT government, Buddhist leaders from China quickly assumed the leadership of Buddhism in Taiwan through several means. One, the government claimed to hold the ownership of temples as the spoils of war because these temples had allied with the Japanese lineage and therefore were viewed as Japanese properties. Many Taiwanese monks therefore demanded Chinese monks join and even assume leadership positions so as to provide protection for their temples.<sup>77</sup> The government also urged the Chinese Buddhist Association (中國佛教會, CBA) to resume its activities in Taiwan, and to put Chinese monks in leading positions. Since 1953 CE, the CBA monopolised the right of 'the Delivery of Dharma and Vinaya' and brought all Taiwanese Buddhist temples and institutions completely under its control.<sup>78</sup> These actions successfully transformed Taiwanese Buddhism from Japanese

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>77</sup> Jiang Chanteng, *The Study of the History of Taiwanese Buddhism for the Past One Hundred Years: 1895-1995*, Taipei, Taiwan: Nantian Books, 1996, 274.

<sup>78</sup> In Buddhism, 'the delivery of Dharma and Vinaya' means the delivery of the lineage. The deliverers

assimilation to a Chinese identity.

Furthermore, Chinese Buddhist monks' successful occupation of the leadership roles also caused the renunciation tendency of Taiwanese Buddhism. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Buddhist reformation movement in China caused a fissure in Buddhism into two separate groups: the conservative and the reformed. After 1949 CE, monks of both groups retreated to Taiwan, but the conservative group held the leadership of CBA and Taiwanese Buddhism. Leadership by the conservative group caused Buddhism to lose its vitality and to be controlled by the government, which pushed Buddhism towards its withdrawn tendency.

In spite of this, Chinese Buddhists still made contributions to Buddhism in Taiwan by laying the groundwork for its later development in the 1980s. Their contribution especially showed through the advancement of the study of Buddhist beliefs by propagating Dharma and educating its believers. Their works attracted more educated people to study and convert to Buddhist beliefs.<sup>79</sup> Although Chinese reformed Buddhists were marginal in Taiwanese Buddhism in this period, their works on the reformation of Buddhism yielded great effects. Some reformers, such as Yinshun (印順), made efforts towards establishing the doctrinal foundation of Buddhist reformation. Others, such as Shinyun (星雲) and Shengyen (聖嚴) committed themselves to the practical movements of Buddhist reformation. The efforts of these reformers gradually generated harvests, and eventually brought about the later revival.

## Christianity

### The Change of Churches' Structure

Like Buddhism, Christian churches in Taiwan also experienced change in their organisational structure. Chinese Catholic clergy quickly assumed the leadership in Taiwan. Since 1945 CE, mainlanders have led CCT. Until 1976, all the bishops in CCT were mainlanders, and there was still no Taiwanese clergy entering the core leadership levels.<sup>80</sup> In Protestant churches, many missionaries, domestic pastors, and lay Christians came from China, and established the third main church branch, the Mandarin Protestant Church (MPC). These churches were principally established by

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are the masters and possess the authority over those who receive the delivery. Because of the monopoly of the delivery of the Dharma and Vinaya, Taiwanese monks had to obey the leadership of Chinese monks. Ibid., 292-294.

<sup>79</sup> Chiu Heiyuan, *The Religious Belief and Attitude of Taiwanese People in The Social and Political Analysis of the Change of Religions in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Guiguan plc, 1997, 7.

<sup>80</sup> Eric O. Hanson, *Catholic Politics in China and Korea*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1980, 92.

Western Evangelical and Faith Mission missionaries, and mainly spoke Mandarin. Christian churches in Taiwan gelled into three main groups: PCT, CCT, and MPC.

### Speedy Growth in the First Two Decades

From about 1945 to 1964, Christian churches in Taiwan experienced extraordinary growth. There is a common perception that the social situation pushed people in Taiwan to turn to Christianity. In the early stage of this period, Taiwan was in a state of turbulence and uncertainty, and people sought comfort in religion. The arrival of many Chinese Christian elite and experienced missionaries strengthened the churches' enthusiasm and capability to propagate the gospel. The churches' evangelisation obtained great effects. This speedy growth gradually declined, however, after the 1960s, gradual stabilisation of Taiwanese society and economic development reduced people's sense of insecurity and their eagerness to seek religion.<sup>81</sup> The withdrawal of military and economic aid from the United States caused Christian churches to lose their advantages in terms of economic and social resources.<sup>82</sup> Since the 1970s, the growth of churches had declined and Christians remained at 5% of the Taiwanese population.<sup>83</sup>

Apart from the churches' growth, there were some special features evidenced in the three main Church groups. In the 1960s, CCT had sensed the importance of the Church's inculturation. The late Cardinal Yu Bin (于斌) advocated that the Catholic Church practiced the rites of ancestral reverence.<sup>84</sup> Catholic theologians began working on the dialogue and integration of Christian faith and Confucianism. These efforts granted in certain achievements in expressing Christian belief more Chinese style. However, they focused mainly on the identification with Chinese culture rather than Taiwanese. The development of contextual theology in the 1970s caused PCT to be considered as more focused on caring for the wellbeing of the homeland and its

<sup>81</sup> Chiu Heiyuan, *The Study of the Change of Taiwanese Religions in The Social and Political Analysis to the Change of Taiwanese Religions*, Taipei, Taiwan: Guiguan plc, 1997, 59.

<sup>82</sup> Jiang Chanteng, *Contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism: Buddha Light Mountain, Tzuchi, Dharma Drum Mountain, and Middle Taiwan Mountain (中台禪寺)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Nantien Books, 1997, 2.

<sup>83</sup> According to the statistics of the Chinese Christian Evangelical Association (中華福音協進會), the total number of members of Christian churches was 1,126,786, which was 5.01% in a total population of 22,276,672. This ratio of the Christian population has not changed since the 1970s. See the Research and Statistics of the Information of Taiwanese Churches in 2001 (2001年台灣教會資料統計和研究), Chinese Christian Evangelical Association (中華基督教福音協進會), cited 16 September 2003, available from <http://www.ccea.org.tw>

<sup>84</sup> Ancestor reverence rather than ancestor worship is used here because Catholic Church considered it is a rite showing their reverence to ancestors rather than viewing them to be gods.

people.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, the PCT mainly focused on political issues while ignoring other parts of society. The MPC mainly focused on the strategy of church growth and held a series of massive evangelical outreaches so that the Church's growth would reach the levels achieved in the 1950s. Statistics show that while the outreaches brought a certain degree of growth, that growth could not catch up to the hugely increasing Taiwanese population. These Christian traditions eagerly worked towards the growth or contextualisation/inculturation of Christianity in Taiwan, but the effects of their works were limited. Christianity in Taiwan during this period was still a minority religion and considered a foreign religion.

## Conclusion

There were some significant features of the religious condition in the Nationalist period. Firstly, religious development was still closely related to the context. The political, economic, and social situation directly influenced the growth and decline of religions. Statistics reveal that those beliefs with syncretistic and mystic tendencies such as Han folk beliefs declined dramatically. And while the institutional religions gradually held their places, the condition of religious pluralism had changed. The decrease of beliefs with syncretistic elements did not mean that the condition of religious pluralism degenerated. This condition only changed to reflect the coexistence of multiple separate religions. Although these religions contained different degrees of exclusivist tendencies, they could not deny the reality of the others' existence. Therefore, the appropriate relationships between these religions became the new issue. Additionally, the pragmatic characteristics of religions were restricted by the government as a result of its religious policy. The government only allowed Confucian pragmatic values to stand out, which then became the mainline belief system, so as to maintain the stability of the regime and society. As for institutional religions, which originally contained other-worldly tendencies, the government forced them to participate in this-worldly concern except for the social ministry which was under the approval and leadership of the government. As for the folk beliefs, which originally maintained strong pragmatism, the government restricted their moral influence through promotion of Confucianism. Although religious pragmatic value was restricted in this period, this does not mean that people did not need the pragmatic function of religion. When the social context changed, religious pragmatic function

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<sup>85</sup> The details of PCT's contextual theology and its practices will be discussed in Chapter Six of this thesis.

established its importance again.

## **The Democratic Period**

### **General Social and Political Situation**

The democratic movements of dissidents and the KMT leaders' political reformation achieved a political liberation.<sup>86</sup> Taiwan moved forward into a democratic period. This political change brought about both economic and social changes in Taiwan. There are some facts that feature in the conditions of this period. Firstly, cultural restrictions were released through the evaporation of political restrictions. Cultural release brought vitality to the whole society, but at the same time, left the culture in an unstable reconstructed condition. Because the KMT government lost its control, the search for a self-identity for Taiwan and the attempts of independence from China became important social trends. These trends caused Taiwan to face a military threat from China and isolation from the international community. Moreover, high economic development and material prosperity caused Taiwan to continuously shift towards becoming a commercial and secular society.

These above features brought about the new religious condition: a religious revival in the 1980s was a direct result of these. In this revival, the rise of Buddhism is foremost. And there are numerous new religious sects continually cropping up. However, some belief systems missed the wave of this revival and even went into decline. The next few paragraphs will describe the detailed condition of some religions during this period.

### **The Decline of Confucianism**

The end of the Nationalist dictatorship directly impacted the dominance of Confucianism in Taiwan. Because the KMT government gradually lost its political control, Confucianism in its institutional form also declined, and some of its values were viewed suspiciously and it gradually lost its influence. One reason for this is the KMT government closely related advocating Confucianism to identification with Chinese culture and to its mission of regaining Mainland China. Therefore, for the Taiwanese who eagerly sought their own identity and were disappointed with the rule of KMT, Confucianism stood in opposition to Taiwanese identity.

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<sup>86</sup> From the perspective of the Nationalist government, democracy had started since 1911 CE, when the republican China was born. However, not until 1987 CE, when martial law was lifted, the opposition party was established, and a democratic system started to operate, was there a really democratic system in Taiwan.



Another reason for this decline is that the government and the Neo-Confucian scholars' advocacy of Confucianism was empty and shallow, and did not really influence the grass roots level of society. The fact that the government and Confucianism attempted to impose Chinese identity in a location distant from China was the main factor for why this cultural assimilation was unable to find a hold in Taiwanese society and was predestined to fail. Furthermore, the Neo-Confucian scholars remained solely in the academic fields and were isolated from the real situations of the community, thus producing hollow results.<sup>87</sup> Although Confucianism had been the dominant value system and contributed to the stability of society, when the KMT government gradually lost dominance in politics, Confucianism quickly followed in its decline from the social value system.

The decline of Confucianism resulted in the collapse of common shared values in Taiwan. A positive effect of this situation is that various systems of thoughts now arose and brought vitality to society. The negative result is that it has led to confusion in the value systems and has caused the society to lose its moral rudder. This is the main reason that Taiwan began another period of upheaval and cultural reconstruction.

### **The Revival of Buddhism**

Unlike Confucianism, Buddhism experienced a great revival. Under the leadership of four main Modern Buddhist complexes,<sup>88</sup> Buddha Light Mountain (佛光山), Tzu-chi Merit Society (慈濟功德會, Tzuchi), Dharma Drum Mountain (法鼓山), and Middle Taiwan Chan Temple (中台禪寺), the numbers of followers and temples rapidly grew, and various programs such as massive meetings for propagating Dharma and Meditation Camps were held. Beside these religious activities, they also became involved in social services such as charity, education, ecology, and even politics. Sociologists and Buddhist scholars have analysed the factors of this Buddhist revival: in terms of the social and political context, the government's release of its control upon religion brought about the reexamination of many Buddhist institutions.<sup>89</sup> The economic growth left the society wealthy, and, with the belief that good conduct will

<sup>87</sup> Lee Shiwei, *Taiwanese Confucian Movements in the Period of Japanese Occupation*, in the *Religions and Cultures in Taiwan*, Wang Zhianchuan and Lee Shiwei, Luzhou, Taiwan: Boy Young, 1999, 229-230.

<sup>88</sup> In some Chinese Buddhist writings, these Buddhist 'groups' are called 'Shan Tou (山頭)' rather than traditional names such as lineage or sects. This is because these Buddhist groups each owns numerous institutes, sub-institutes, temples, and temple groups. Therefore, they are called 'complex' here.

<sup>89</sup> Jiang Chanteng, *The Study of the History of Taiwanese Buddhism for the Past One Hundred Years: 1895-1995*, Taipei, Taiwan: Nantian Books, 1996, 449-450.



make merit, caused many lay Buddhists who were able and willing to donate great amounts of money to support these Buddhist enterprises, which required substantial sums maintain their ministries.<sup>90</sup> Again, the social upheaval due to the confusion of the value system, the spiritual emptiness, and the threat from China, pushed people to seek comfort from religions.

The context cannot completely explain why Buddhism outstripped other religions and jumped to the dominant place in this period. Some factors inside Buddhism play more important roles. Firstly, some charismatic leaders arose from Buddhism, including Master Shinyun of Buddha Light, Master Chengyen (証嚴法師) of Tzuchi, and Master Shengyen of Dharma Drum Mountain,<sup>91</sup> and attracted people from various levels of society. Modern Buddhist institutions are good at utilising modern technology and administrative management in developing their ministries.<sup>92</sup> And, since the 1970s, Buddhists in Taiwan have paid special attention to Buddhist education, such as propagating Buddhist beliefs among college students and establishing Buddhist institutions of higher education. Their efforts to elevate Buddhist academic levels have cultivated many Buddhist elite and attracted many educated people to study and convert to Buddhism.

Of all the factors affecting Buddhist revival, the most crucial one is a reformation of Buddhist doctrines and practices. This Buddhist reformation is called the movement of 'Humanistic Buddhism.' The details of this movement will be left to the fifth chapter of this thesis. This movement has brought about the transformation of Buddhism from traditionally renouncing this world to actively participating in the reformation of society. Such transformation has been considered a main source of the revival of Buddhism in Taiwan.

### **The Rise of New Religious Movements**

In addition to the rise of Buddhist popularity, other new religious movements arose in this period. Chiu Heiyuan notes that since 1997 CE, his research group found at least 100 religious groups that can be considered as new religious sects.<sup>93</sup> These new sects show syncretistic characteristics in their mixing of elements from traditional

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<sup>90</sup> Jiang Chanteng, *Contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism: Buddha Light Mountain, Tzuchi, Dharma Drum Mountain, and Middle Taiwan Mountain*, Taipei, Taiwan: Nantien Books, 1997, 2-3.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 2-4.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 3, 9.

<sup>93</sup> Laura Li (李光真), *Taiwan's New Age Cults* (世紀末, 神佛滿天飛—台灣的新興宗教風), Sina (光華雜誌), September 2000, 6, 7.

beliefs such as Daoism, Buddhism, and folk beliefs. Some of them claim to be parts of traditional religions, but are always disowned by these religions. Although these groups seem to show syncretistic characteristics, they usually hold exclusive attitudes to other new religious groups. This attitude is illustrated by their claims that their particular charismatic leaders are in the highest realm of spiritual practices over leaders of other groups, and display the utmost power in solving human problems. Therefore, their followers are required to worship these leaders as gods. Their statues are even put on shrines for the people to worship.<sup>94</sup> These groups also hold strong mystic elements emphasising experiences of miraculous powers.<sup>95</sup> Unlike the traditional folk beliefs, they provide a modern and scientific interpretation of these miraculous powers so as to win over their educated followers. Furthermore, in order to attract people, these groups usually emphasise immediate effects for people's desires and promise an easy way to help people attain their final destinies.<sup>96</sup>

These characteristics cause the new religious groups to attract Taiwanese people easily, but do not help in the reformation of a chaotic society. There are many scandals and frauds exposed in these religious groups, and many leaders are arrested by the judicial organisations. These scandals usually reveal that many of their followers were swindled out of money by their religious leaders. The amount of the money and the number of followers involved directly impacts the stability of the whole society.<sup>97</sup> The rise of these new religions has not made helpful contributions towards the constructive readjustment of Taiwanese society.

### **Two Directions of Contemporary Religions in Taiwan**

The above section mentioned that there was religious revival after the lifting of martial law, and this revival is revealed especially in the reemergence of Buddhism and the new religious movements. From one perspective, this revival was the result of the phenomenon of people's spiritual emptiness, owing to the confusion of their value system and the prosperity of their material lives. However, Lin Benxuan (林本炫), a Taiwanese religious scholar, believes that this is not a religious revival but a religious reshuffle, meaning that the decrease of the followers of traditional Buddhism and folk beliefs led to the increase of followers of 'Humanistic Buddhism' and new religious

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> The events include events of the Song Chili (宋七力事件), of the Master Miao Tien (妙天禪師), and of Utmost Master of Chinghai (清海無上師) in 1996 and 1997.

groups.<sup>98</sup> This reshuffle shows the influence of secularisation and materialism on current Taiwanese religions. Those religions that contain stronger secular attributes present a greater attraction for Taiwanese people. This tendency occurs in two opposite directions. On the one hand, the religions that care for present human welfare more than seeking other-worldly destinies attract people and encourage their commitments to the welfare of society. The revival of modern Buddhism can be viewed as the result of this direction. Conversely, religions that serve the immediacy of satisfying human material desires also attract people seeking material benefits. The proliferation of new religious sects demonstrates this latter of direction. These two directions represent the religious tendency towards secularism in this period. It raises the question of which direction will become the main Taiwanese religious tendency in the future and which direction will bring positive influences to the current society of Taiwan.

### **The Characteristics of Religion in Taiwan**

The above sections show two main characteristics of religion in Taiwan. The first is that domestic Taiwanese religions contain a pluralistic tendency. This pluralism has developed through different appearances in differing periods of the history between the polarity of syncretism and separatism. The second characteristic is that of domestic religions' strong pragmatic tendencies. These tendencies show two directions: in its development in examining these characteristics, it becomes clear that the three main Christian traditions were slow to respond to these developments and therefore remains a marginal religion. The following paragraphs will provide detailed analysis of these characteristics.

### **The Polarity between Syncretism and Separatism**

Throughout Taiwanese history, Taiwan's social pluralism reflects the plurality of its religions. This characteristic makes different appearances in Taiwanese history. Prior to Japanese occupation, this characteristic displayed its syncretistic tendency. Han folk beliefs mixed their own beliefs and drew from elements of the three Chinese traditional religions, while each of the Chinese traditional religions drew from

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<sup>98</sup> This idea is expressed in Lin's *Religious Fever or Religious Reshuffle—Another Interpretation to the Transformation of Contemporary Taiwanese Religions* (宗教熱潮或信仰重組—對台灣當代信仰變遷的另一種解讀), in the 'Conference of Religion, Superstition, and the Society', The Social Department, Academia Sinica, 1996, cited 16 December 2003, available from the author's personal webpage <http://netcity.hinet.net/lin66/mewpages3.htm>

elements of other beliefs. This did not mean that these folk beliefs did not maintain an air of exclusivism; rather, this exclusive tendency was shown not in their attitudes towards the differences of their beliefs, but towards the different clans or resident identities behind these beliefs. In general, their beliefs were syncretistic.

This syncretistic condition changed during the Japanese occupation because of the policy of the government. The institutional religions grew stronger and their syncretistic characteristics faded, in part because of the encouragement of the colonialist government and the influence of Japanese religions. The Japanese intentionally suppressed the development of beliefs with syncretistic characteristics because the government viewed these beliefs as superstitious, which would inhibit the modernisation of Taiwan. Furthermore, the government considered these beliefs to contain possible political resistance. These considerations led the government to suppress the development of folk beliefs, and to encourage the development of institutional religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity, as their beliefs were thought to contain more rational and moral characteristics. Besides the policy of government, the Japanese institutional religions contributed to the growth of these institutional religions by assisting them in the reduction of their superstitious elements. Despite all of this, folk beliefs remained the most popular belief in Taiwan.

The decrease of syncretism and the growth of institutional religions continued in the Nationalist period. These religions kept growing and the boundary between religions became more distinct. With similar motivations as the Japanese government, the KMT government took a suppressive stance towards syncretistic beliefs. A typical example is the KMT government's order banning the Unity Sect (一貫道), which is a sect adhering to the syncretism of five religions in the 1950s. According to Chiu Heiyuan's empirical study, the rising educational levels caused people in Taiwan to turn to religions with a rational framework.<sup>99</sup> The original reason why the KMT government suppressed these beliefs is not because of their syncretistic characteristics but like the Japanese, because of their superstitions. However, since those beliefs with syncretistic characteristics also contained superstitious characteristics, the population of their followers continuously decreased, although local folk belief still influenced the common people. Hence, during this period, the plural situation of religion continued to shift away from syncretistic idiosyncrasy towards the plural existence of

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<sup>99</sup> Chiu Heiyuan, *The Exploration to the Transformation of Religions in Taiwan* (台灣地區宗教變遷之探討) in *The Social and Political Analysis of the Change of Religions in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Guiguan plc, 1997, 53-54.

separate religions.

In appearance, the syncretistic characteristic in the democratic period seems to revive because of the rise of new religious groups, which usually attempt to provide a system of belief containing elements of all the traditional religions. However, unlike traditional folk belief, which possesses less exclusive attitudes towards other beliefs, these new sects held strong exclusive attitudes to other religious groups. This situation keeps the question of how religions view each other and what is the appropriate relationship between them.

### **The Polarity between Pragmatism and Ideology**

The religions in Taiwan also present pragmatic characteristics. This pragmatism is shown by the fact that religions permeate Taiwanese people's lives and formulate their morals and value systems. Furthermore, this characteristic is displayed in people's search more for greater religious pragmatism over the significance of their ultimate destiny. The last section has shown that there are two dimensions of the pragmatic characteristics in Taiwanese religions; the first of which is religion's role in satiating people's this-worldly needs and desires; the second, is how religion guides people to live morally and in commitment to the greater social welfare. Throughout Taiwanese history, these two dimensions have displayed a supplementary interrelationship and held a proper balance.

In the period of early Taiwanese history, it was folk beliefs that provided for the immediate needs of its believers, and their moral norms were derived from the boundaries between clans or communities. In the Japanese and Nationalist period, when the moral restraint of the community was reduced and institutional religions increased their influence, the moral governance of the society was mainly distilled from institutional religions. Therefore, the moral character of institutional religions themselves, especially Confucianism, played an important role in providing the moral rules of the society. But, the decline of Confucianism and the resultant secular shift of society caused the current moral crisis in Taiwan, with folk beliefs and new religious groups further contributing to the current corruption. Besides the scandals of many of the new religious groups, this corruption is tied to folk beliefs' close association with the lottery and casino. Simultaneously, the Buddhist revival owes its success to the attention it has paid to the pragmatic values of its faith. Its doctrinal transformation enables its ideology to become a possible fountain of new moral norms for people in contemporary Taiwan.



These pragmatic characteristics of Taiwanese religions exhibit some significant features. Firstly, the pragmatic value of religions becomes an important factor in attracting people to convert to religion in Taiwan. People focus more on the pragmatic value of religions than their respective metaphysical concepts or to the significance of religious other-worldly destiny. Secondly, as Taiwanese religions closely connect people's lives, the kind of religion in Taiwan that will hold the greatest sway and eventually produce the status quo value system will be a crucial issue for the future of Taiwan. In its current democratic period, Taiwanese society stands at a crossroad and religions play a crucial role in guiding the direction in which the society will move forward. Other issues for religions in Taiwan include where exactly Taiwanese religions will lead the society and how these religions will bring positive influences to the society and rehabilitate its corruption.

### **Christian Responses to the Characteristics of Religions in Taiwan**

Throughout Taiwanese history, Christianity has made contributions to the society and to the modernisation of Taiwan, but they have stayed in the margin of its religions and culture. The number of its followers has been a minority population. Before the retrocession of Taiwan to China, the ratio of Christians in the total population was less than 1%. The extraordinary growth in the 1950s and 1960s caused the ratio to increase to 5% at most. Although Christianity was introduced to Taiwan over one hundred and fifty years ago, thus far, it has been held by Taiwanese people as a foreign religion. One of the reasons that Christianity has not been greatly accepted by the Taiwanese people is the Church's slow response to Taiwanese religion's idiosyncrasies, its plural condition and pragmatic tendency, and furthermore it has not succeeded in its contextualisation.

#### **Churches' Ignorance in Handling Its Relationship with Other Religions**

The preceding section of this chapter mentioned that in early Taiwanese history, Christian churches had been opposed by Taiwanese people and had endured tension with domestic Taiwanese religions. This condition can be viewed as an unavoidable result of two cultures or religions encounter one another. The Christian mission's long identification as part of foreign invasive force was another reason. However, it is the Christian mission's ignorance of religious plurality exclusivist attitude that have played the greatest factors of its marginality. Taiwanese Christian historian, Zheng Yangen (鄭仰恩), notes that, from its exclusive standpoint, the Christian mission held



a hostile attitude towards other religions. In an interview, he said:

In early period of Christian mission, missionaries took a typical Western missionary model. They dialogued with Confucian elite discussing the Five Classics and Four Books with them and affirming their moral conscience. However, they took an opposing standpoint to the religious people. They disputed with the monks and Daoist priests trying to overpower them and proving that my religion is superior to yours.<sup>100</sup>

This attitude and strategy resulted in the Taiwanese churches being in constant tension with Taiwanese religions. Numerous events in this conflict occurred in Taiwanese Church history.<sup>101</sup> The Church's exclusive attitude to other religions was strengthened when the Catholic churches from China and MPC moved to Taiwan, because they held an even more exclusive attitude in their theological standpoint. Although there were never any direct conflicts between churches and other religions, the tension has never abated. This exclusive tendency currently exists today, and the details will be discussed at length in Chapter Two. It should be noted here that the Church's exclusive tendency and its relational ignorance are the leading factor of the Church's fringe status.

#### Churches' Withdrawal from Its Pragmatic Characteristics

Without eliminating its concern with human personal salvation and its evangelisation, Christianity showed caring for human this-worldly wellbeing at its earliest introduction to Taiwan. The last section mentioned that, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the missions of two Christian churches paid much attention to social ministries in medicine, education, and the charity works, which contributed to the wellbeing of

<sup>100</sup> Zheng Yangen, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Taiwan Presbyterian Theological College and Seminary, 20 November 2002. The Chinese text is: '從早期宣教師, 以馬偕為例, 他們是典型的西方宣教模式, 他們和知識份子對話, 和士大夫談四書五經, 肯定他們的道德心。但是宗教人不同, 他們的態度是對立, 面對道士僧侶的態度是辯論, 且要駁倒他們, 証明我的宗教優於你的。'

<sup>101</sup> These conflicts can be easily seen in 1. Thomas de la Hoz, *One Hundred Years of Dominican Apotolate in Taiwan*, Chen Zhialu translated from Japanese edition, Zuoying, Taiwan: Zuoying Catholic Chapel (台灣左營: 左營天主堂), 1960; 2. Rev. Jas. Johnston, *China and Formosa: The Story of the Mission of the Presbyterian Church of England*, London: Hazel, Watson, & Viney, LD. 1897; 3. Dorothy A. Rober, *Protestantism in Changing Taiwan: A Call to Creative Response*, South Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1978; 4. Holington K. Tong, *Christianity in Taiwan: A History*, Taipei, Taiwan: China Post, 1972; 5. The editing group of 'Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,' *Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, revised, Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2000.

Taiwanese people and the modernisation of its society. Christianity also provided the ideological framework to help motivate people in devoting themselves to social reformation. These Christian social ministries had vigorously developed until the Japanese occupation took sole control over all social and cultural activities, and suppressed Christian social ministries towards the end of Japanese occupation.

In the early stages of the Nationalist period, Christian social ministries were still active and played important roles in the reconstruction of society. It would turn out that Christian pragmatic characteristics would gradually decline later, and with the reduction of social ministries came the focus on the ministry of personal salvation. In CCT, social ministry has been one of their most central, however, the problem was the source of these social ministries, namely, that they were of Western origin. When the support of foreign missionary institutes eventually withdrew, the domestic churches could not sustain these social ministries further, as the domestic churches of CCT were weak, and short of funding. Thus, though many of CCT's social ministries still continued their vitality and influence has fell into decline.

The above section has mentioned that the PCT consistently paid attention to social ministry, and developed a contextual theology that helped the Church to focus on caring for the immediate needs of Taiwanese people. By the 1970s, however, the praxis of the pragmatism was mainly political focus. PCT's attention to politics and the independence of Taiwan contributed to the success of democratisation in Taiwan, but hindered its work in other social ministries. Its pragmatic characteristics were restricted to political appeasement at the expense of its other fields.

The MPC Christians and missionaries mainly held conservative theological standpoints. They focused their Christian mission on only seeking personal and other-worldly salvation. They wholly ignored the this-worldly significance of the Christian faith. Under the influence of Donald A. McGarvin's theory and strategy of 'church growth', MPC focused mainly on the expansion of its native Christian population and churches, and conducted many massive evangelical outreaches. Statistics show that the effects of these movements are limited and moved MPC far away from its pragmatic roots.

The development of the three Christian traditions in Taiwan shows that the churches' original pragmatic characteristics have gradually eroded, again due to different factors in different traditions. Where many religious groups focus more on pragmatic characteristics so as to help themselves adjust to the secular tendencies of society, Christian churches, on the contrary, gradually withdrew from society and

decreased their contributions to social wellbeing in the later Nationalist period. After the 1990s, the leaders of three traditions have discovered this problem and sought to encourage churches to pay more attention to social affairs. For instance, PCT has started movements such as 'the Mission of the Kingdom of God (上帝國宣教)',<sup>102</sup> and 'Mission to Community' (社區宣教), so as to broaden their social ministry.<sup>103</sup> In MPC, groups like the Chinese Christian Rescue Association (基督徒救助協會, CCRA) were founded to participate practically in social works. Since these actions were initiated so late, the scope of their effectiveness awaits further observation.

## Conclusion

Christian reluctance in responding to two major Taiwanese religious characteristics fermented the absence of the Church's indigenisation, mainly for its perception being as a foreign religion, and its subsequent marginality. There were some efforts towards the contextualisation of Christian churches in Taiwan, such as the dialogue of the CCT with Chinese culture and the PCT's efforts in developing the concept and practice of contextual theology. However, minus the above efforts, the sum of Christian attempts at contextualisation has yet to provide more appropriate responses to the religious character of Taiwan.

## Conclusion

The general review of the composition and nature of Taiwanese religious plurality in this chapter illustrated how the character of Taiwanese religions is understood in terms of the dynamic interplay between the polarities of syncretism and separatism, and the functional value and metaphysical concepts of religion. Our analysis of the historical development of these religions shows that each oscillates between the poles of syncretism and separatism, between the balance of mixing elements of various religious traditions and a distinctive self-definition, while all the time, coexisting with them. Recent sociological studies argue that an intensification of institutional religious identities in Taiwan has accentuated the poles of separatism, with each religion becoming more concerned with self-identity, and that the decline of folk beliefs has weakened traditional syncretism. For the most part such separation is accompanied by pragmatic coexistence, with each religion recognising the social

<sup>102</sup> The editing group of 'Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,' *Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, revised, Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2000, 113-117.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 118-119.

value of non-confrontational relationships with each other. It is in this sense that religious pluralism in contemporary Taiwan can be described as pragmatic.

The findings of this chapter suggest that there is some correlation between separatism and pragmatism. This functions in two ways: one tendency is for religions in Taiwan to gratify the needs of their followers, with little or no regard for the common good of society. The example of Confucianism shows that a religious tradition may unify a sense of identity with a commitment to the collective interests of society as a whole. With the decline of Confucianism as the official religious framework for Taiwanese society, a vacuum emerged, and the capacity of Taiwanese religions to be self-interested meant that there is little religious commitment towards the collective good of Taiwanese society.

The modern history of Taiwanese Buddhism reveals the dynamics between syncretism and separatism, pragmatism and ideology. In contrast to the syncretism that marked earlier Buddhist history, the modern Taiwanese Buddhist movement contains strong reformist tendencies that are concerned with expelling non-Buddhist elements from Buddhist beliefs structures, in a return to Buddhist orthodoxy. An important element of this reform has been to focus Buddhism on realising the Pure Land in this world rather than in an other-worldly realm, and to apply this ideology in encouraging Buddhists to participate in socially engaged ministry that seeks the reformation of the society. It is due to this self-transformation that Buddhism has become the most prominent religion in Taiwan currently, by proving its value to the society as a whole.

Taiwanese Christianity has, as the chapter has shown, identified itself as a separatist religion, standing away from the traditions of syncretism that have historically influenced other religions. Emphasis on personal salvation and its neglect of social ministry has accentuated the churches' concern for their own members, at the expense of engaging with other religions. This has been changing since the 1970s with the PCT's movement towards contextualisation, and the CCT's initiatives in inter-religious dialogue. But there is, as yet, little evidence among the Christian churches of the emergence of a theological grounding for religious pluralism.

The findings of this chapter therefore confirm the first hypothesis of this thesis: that by withdrawing itself from social ministry, and identifying itself against the pluralist traditions of Taiwanese religions, Taiwanese Christianity has allowed itself to be perceived as foreign to flourish in Taiwanese culture, and of little relevance to Taiwanese society. The confirmation of this hypothesis raises an important issue for Taiwanese Churches: if the contextualisation process on which Taiwanese Christianity

has now embarked is to continue, how will Taiwanese Christianity begin to actualise the reality of thriving in a religiously plural culture. To answer this question, Taiwanese Christianity will, simply put, have to enter into dialogue with other Taiwanese religions. This is a fundamental step towards eliminating tensions between itself and other religions. It also offers a way of co-operating with other religions in promoting the greater social wellbeing. It raises the question, however, of whether such dialogue would be undertaken on merely pragmatic grounds, or whether Taiwanese Christianity can develop a theological justification and methodological system for religious pluralism that will help fill the current vacuum. Given that Buddhism has now become the most prominent religion in Taiwan, Christian dialogue with Buddhism is the best place to start.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Christian-Buddhist Relationships in Taiwan—Interactions and Religious Views of the Other**

#### **Introduction**

The analysis of Taiwanese religious culture in Chapter One demonstrated Taiwanese religious plurality in its history and contemporary society. The analysis argued that Taiwanese Christianity's reluctance to situate itself in this plurality is one of the reasons for its alienation from Taiwanese society. This reality shows that, for the purpose contextualising Taiwanese Christianity, dialogue with other religions, especially Buddhism, becomes a compelling issue for Christian Churches in Taiwan. However, the empirical situation of Christian-Buddhist interaction is not reflecting this reality.

It is this discrepancy that will be explored in Part Two, on the basis of the qualitative research that the researcher conducted in Taiwan in 2002-3. This research was guided by two questions. What is the relationship between Christianity and Buddhism, and what are the factors that have influenced and continue to influence the ways in which Taiwanese Christians and Buddhists view each other? What is the record of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan, and what prospects does it suggest for the future?

Chapter Two will present the evidence that the researcher uncovered with respect to the first question, while Chapter Three will deal with the second. To express the distinction in another way, Chapter Two focuses on the broad issues of historical and contemporary relationships between Christianity and Buddhism in Taiwan, highlighting factors that influence the ways in which each religion tend to perceive the other. Against this background, Chapter Three explores the actual record of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan, assessing its achievements and analysing the impediments that have retarded its growth. Chapter Three concludes with a critical evaluation of the evidence presented in both chapters, and will offer an estimation of the present condition and future potential of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan.

Within the framework of Part Two as a whole, Chapter Two focuses mainly on an analysis of the relationship between Taiwanese Christianity and Buddhism based on the findings of the author's qualitative research. The research will be presented under three headings. The first examines the elements of past historical interactions between these two religions in Taiwan, and will focus on the causes, processes and legacies of



the tension that have existed between them. The second assesses more recent developments in Christian-Buddhist relations with a focus on factors that are leading to the resolution of past difficulties and the measures of reconciliation. Attention will also be given to continuing problems, especially to some recent incidents that will impede the complete conciliation of the relationship. Thirdly, the chapter will discuss the members' views at each religion towards the other based on in-depth interviews.

Through the exploration of representative events in the past and present, and the data from personal interviews, this chapter will test the second hypothesis of the thesis: that the actual situation of the interaction between Christianity and Buddhism in Taiwan suggests that neither Taiwanese Christians nor Taiwanese Buddhists show convincing evidence towards recognising the importance of inter-religious dialogue in Taiwan.

Due to the dearth of published literary sources, the evidence presented in Chapter Two is primarily acquired through qualitative in-depth interviews. The study of previous and contemporary Christian-Buddhist interaction begins with interviews from historians of the two religions,<sup>1</sup> and with others concerned with Christian-Buddhist relationship or those who have participated in Christian-Buddhist dialogue.<sup>2</sup> These interviewees provide primary insight on the history and current state of Christian-Buddhist interactions. In the course of these interviews the researcher's attention adhered to relevant literary sources, mainly Chinese, and to other persons who were subsequently interviewed.

The information for the third heading of this chapter – the view that each religion has of the other – was also gathered through interviews with people from different groups within the two religious communities. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, this qualitative research attempts to balance the different traditions of the two religions while covering all the strata in the various communities of the two religions so as to acquire reasonably comprehensive information. Christian interviewees were selected from the three main Christian traditions in Taiwan, the CCT, the PCT, and the MPC. Interviewees from the Pentecostal churches were included later, in recognition of their increasing influence on the Taiwanese churches and their respective views on Christian-Buddhist dialogue. Interviewees from each tradition included church leaders,

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<sup>1</sup> These scholars include Cai Lizhen (蔡麗貞) of MPC, Zheng Yangen (鄭仰恩) of PCT, and Huiyang (慧嚴) and Jiang Chanteng (江燦騰) of Buddhism.

<sup>2</sup> These key persons include Albert Poulet-Mathis of the Catholic Church, Yu Jibin (俞繼斌) of China Lutheran Seminary, Zheng Yangen (鄭仰恩) of Taiwan Theological College and Seminary, Peng Huaibin (彭懷冰) of Campus Press, and Wu Kunsheng (吳鯤生) of Campus Press.

scholars, local clergy and lay people. Buddhist interviewees were selected from both traditional Buddhism and 'Humanistic Buddhism,' and included monks, lay people, and scholars.

### **Previous Christian-Buddhist Tension**

The dearth of literary sources makes it hard to sketch a clear picture of historical Christian-Buddhist relation in Taiwan. However, some incidents show that there was constant tension between Christianity and Buddhism ever since Christianity was introduced to Taiwan. The following paragraphs briefly describe some events of earlier Christian-Buddhist interaction.

### **Mission Strategy about Other Religions and Conflict in the Early Period**

Since the 1860s, when missionaries returned to Taiwan, the strategy of the Christian mission was a primary reason for the static tension between Christianity and other religions. Zheng Yangen, a PCT historian, notes that from the beginning Christian missionaries held a hostile attitude towards people of other religions. In an interview, he said 'missionaries adopted the strategy of dialogue with the Chinese Confucian elite, confirming their moral conscience, but they were hostile to religious people and disputed with them so as to encourage them to convert to Christianity.'<sup>3</sup> In an essay about the early Catholic mission in Taiwan, a Catholic priest, Pan Peyqi (潘貝頤) notes that Catholic missionaries held a parallel attitude to that of the PCT.<sup>4</sup>

This strategy of the Church consistently taking a negative attitude towards other religions, resulting in the perception that converting to Christianity in Taiwan was seen by Taiwanese people betraying one's culture and tradition, and was thus doomed to be oppressed and refuted. In an interview, Zheng said, 'the history of the PCT was a history of suffering and martyrdom.'<sup>5</sup> Pan also draws attention to the many conflicts between the CCT and people of other religions that occurred in the early days of the Catholic mission.<sup>6</sup> It is not fair to put all the responsibility for these conflicts onto

<sup>3</sup> Zheng Yangen, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Taiwan Presbyterian Theological College and Seminary, 20 November 2002. Its Chinese text is: '早期宣教士典型的西方宣教模式是和知識分子對話, 肯定他們的道德心, 但是對宗教人不同, 態度是對立的, 和他們辯論, 要駁倒他們.'

<sup>4</sup> Pan Peyqi (潘貝頤), *Religious Encounter in Early Catholic Mission in Taiwan* in *Proceedings of the Conference on Religious Dialogue 2000, Department of Religious Studies, Fugen Catholic University* (從天主教在台灣開教期的宗教會遇看宗教交談 於輔大宗教系 2000 教交談研討會論文集), Xinzhuang, Taiwan: Fugen University Press (台北, 新莊: 輔仁大學出版社), 2000, 263.

<sup>5</sup> Zheng Yangen, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Taiwan Theological College and Seminary, 20 November 2002. The Chinese text is: '台灣教會史是一個受難史和殉道史.'

<sup>6</sup> Pan Peyqi (潘貝頤), *Religious Encounter in Early Catholic Mission In Taiwan* in *Proceedings of the*

Christian missionary strategy. Nevertheless, this Christian attitude was an important factor in these conflicts and ended with tension in the Christian-Buddhist relationship.

### **The Confrontation in Taipei Business Fair**

A significant confrontation between Buddhists and Christians happened during the Japanese occupation. The historical literary sources of both religions record this event.<sup>7</sup> In 1916, after Japan had occupied Taiwan for twenty years, the colonialist government held a month-long Business Fair in Taipei. During this month, the government invited both religious leaders to give speeches introducing their beliefs and the history of their developments in Taiwan. These series of speeches became gatherings in which each religion competed and criticised the other. Though there is no mention of the subsequent reaction from Christianity, all the Buddhists who attended these series of speeches, received a special commendation from their Buddhist leaders.<sup>8</sup> The aggressive competition at the Taipei Business Fair revealed the aggressive attitudes and exclusivist atmosphere on both religions.

### **Debates in the 1950s**

Tension between Christians and Buddhists rose after the KMT government had retreated to Taiwan. Since President Chiang Kaishek (蔣介石) and his wife were both Christians, they preached the gospel to other government leaders and encouraged their conversion. Furthermore, the economic aids from the United States in the 1950s made Taiwanese people friendly to Western countries and, subsequently, Christian churches. As Chapter One mentioned, the social and political upheaval at the 50s and churches' enthusiastic preaching of the gospel resulted in a rapid growth for Christianity. However, inappropriate Christian attitudes and aggressive methods of evangelisation infuriated some Buddhists.<sup>9</sup> These factors made Buddhist leaders worry that the

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*Conference on Religious Dialogue 2000, Department of Religious Studies, Fugen Catholic University (從天主教在台灣開教期的宗教會遇看宗教交談 於輔大宗教系 2000 教交談研討會論文集)*, Xinzhuang, Taiwan: Fugen University Press (台北, 新莊: 輔仁大學出版社), 2000, 264-266.

<sup>7</sup> This event was recorded in Zheng Liaming (鄭連明) ed., *One Hundred Years History of Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (台灣長老教會百年史)*, Taipei, Taiwan: The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 1965, 119; and in Jiang Chanteng, *The Study of the History of Taiwanese Buddhism for the Past One Hundred Years: 1895-1995*, Taipei, Taiwan: Nantian Books, 1996, 143.

<sup>8</sup> Jiang Chanteng, *The Study of the History of Taiwanese Buddhism for the Past One Hundred Years: 1895-1995*, Taipei, Taiwan: Nantian Books, 1996, 143.

<sup>9</sup> Buddhist leaders' discontent of Christian aggressive evangelisation was expressed in Zhuyun (釋煮雲), *The Comparison of Buddhism and Christianity (佛教與基督教的比較)*, Kaohsiung, Taiwan: Qingliang Scripture Printing Association (台灣, 高雄: 青蓮印經會), 1983, 4-7.

government intended to make Taiwan into a Christian country.<sup>10</sup> Though this concern might seem unjustified, this fact meant that Buddhists at the time felt threatened by Christianity.

Under such anxiety, some Buddhist leaders decided to fight back. Master Zhuyun (煮雲法師), the head monk of Fengshan Lotus Group (鳳山蓮社) made a four-day speech in a public lecture hall in Tainan, a major southern Taiwan city.<sup>11</sup> In his lectures, he listed twenty reasons why Buddhism is superior to Christianity and urged people not to be swindled by it.<sup>12</sup> This speech stirred Christian pastors' responses and roused fierce debates in the periodicals of both religions at the time.<sup>13</sup> Chief among them was Rev. Wu Enfu (吳恩溥). Afterwards, Master Yinshun joined the debates due to his anger at aggressive Christian evangelisation.

The published materials of these debates show several consistent features. Since these debates started from a Buddhist sense of crisis and its eager attempt to fight back, the tone of these debates expressed divisive competition between the two religions and had the smell of gunpowder. In Zhuyun's speech, he criticised Chinese Christians as being blind followers while they betrayed country and family for the sake of material gain.<sup>14</sup> When Yinshun criticised Christianity as 'a religion of slavery,' Wu responded that Yinshun 'is darkened in his mind.'<sup>15</sup> The above examples display fiercely verbal confrontation.

Additionally, the contents of their critiques showed a doctrinal ignorance with a

<sup>10</sup> When I visited the Modern Chan Society during my field research, the Buddhist concerned that Chiang intended to change Taiwan into a Christian country was still mentioned by a young Buddhist scholar, Wen Jinke (溫金柯). Master Chaohui (昭慧法師) also expressed this fear when I interviewed her. Their expressions are in Chaohui (昭慧法師), interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Hengshi Buddhist College, Kuanyin (觀音, 弘誓佛學院), 23 December 2002 and Li Yuangsong (李元松), with Leu Yizhong (呂一中) and Wen Jinke (溫金柯), interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Modern Chan Society, Taipei, 30 December 2002.

<sup>11</sup> His speech was published as the book, Zhuyun (煮雲), *The Comparison of Buddhism and Christianity* (佛教與基督教的比較), Kaohsiung, Taiwan (台灣高雄): Qingliang Scripture Printing Association (青蓮印經會), 1983.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 9-92.

<sup>13</sup> These debates were individually published by each religious group later. Except for Zhuyun's book, Yinshun's writings were compiled in *My Views on Religions* (我的宗教觀, *Magnificent Cloud Collection 19* (妙雲集 19), rev. ed., Taipei, Taiwan: Zhengwen Publication (台灣, 台北: 正聞出版社), 1992, 225. Wu's writings are Wu Enfu (吳恩溥), *The Record of Debates between the Pastor and the Monk* (牧師和尚辯道集), Taipei, Taiwan: Shouting Publishing (台灣台北: 呼喊雜誌), 1966.

<sup>14</sup> Zhuyun, *The Comparison of Buddhism and Christianity*, Kaohsiung, Taiwan: Qingliang Scripture Printing Association, 1983, 100.

<sup>15</sup> This is derived from Yinshun's response to Wu's critics. In his "Rediscuss 'For God so Love the World' (上帝愛世人的再討論)". Yinshun, "Rediscuss 'For God so loved the world' " in *My Perspective to Religions, Magnificent Cloud Collection 19*, rev. ed., Taipei, Taiwan: Zhengwen Publication, 1992, 225.

flippant insincerity to the other religion's voices. For instance, in Yinshun's writing, 'For God so loved the world (上帝愛世人)', he said 'God likes his people to be blind and ignorant' without consideration of the Christian explanation to actual meaning of the passage referenced in Genesis Chapter 3.<sup>16</sup>

These debates demonstrate Christianity's classification as a foreign religion in Taiwan. Buddhists saw these conflicts as battles between an indigenous and an invading religion, and maintained that being a Christian was a betrayal of country and culture. In a speech Zhuyun declared, 'Sincerely consider, as a Chinese, what religion you should believe. We Chinese should not forget our customs and traditions. Do not give up our own precious heritages to obtain money and material benefits. Return, convert to Buddhism so as to comfort our parents and be a Chinese with backbone.'<sup>17</sup>

### **The Extension of the Debates in the 1960s**

These clashes continued into the 1960s, but the spokesmen of the two religions had changed. It was a Christian pastor, Rev. Kung Tienmin (龔天民) who initiated the debates this time. Kung grew up a Buddhist and studied at Japanese Buddhist University. At the age of twenty, he converted to Christianity, and later became a Christian pastor of the Lutheran Church. Motivated by his enthusiasm for evangelisation, he wrote a series of articles criticising Buddhism.<sup>18</sup> Some of his writings were a response to earlier Buddhist critiques, such as explaining the differences between the concept of a Christian God and of Buddhist heavenly deities. With his Buddhist background, he attempted to show how the Christian gospel is superior to Buddhist belief and thereby urging Buddhists to convert to Christianity. In refutation Kung, Master Shengyen, the first Taiwanese monk to receive his PhD in Buddhist advanced studies in Japan, wrote a book, 'The Study about Christianity (基督教研究),' in which he criticised the inconsistencies in Christian beliefs. There thus arose more verbal battles in the 1960s.

These debates were milder by comparison to those in the 50s. The irrational

<sup>16</sup> Yinshun, *For God so loved the world (上帝愛世人) in My Perspective to Religions, Magnificent Cloud Collection 19*, rev. ed., Taipei, Taiwan: Zhengwen Publication, 1992, 184-197.

<sup>17</sup> Zhuyun, *The Comparison of Buddhism and Christianity*, Kaohsiung, Taiwan: Qingliang Scripture Printing Association, 1983, 99-100. The Chinese text is: '各位, 請你們回家後捫心想一想, 我是中國人, 我信的是甚麼教? 中國人不要忘記了中國的風俗民情, 不要爲了拿人家幾個錢, 失去了自己的寶...趕快回過頭來, 歸依佛教, 安慰老人, 做一個中華民族有骨氣的兒女.'

<sup>18</sup> These articles were published to several books later including: *The Study and Critics to Buddhism (佛教研究及批判)*, *The Comparison between Buddhism and Christianity (佛教和基督教的比較)*, and *The Answers to Miaozheng's Ten Questions (答妙貞十問)*.



explanations and prejudiced verbal abuse had lessened, and the comparison between the two religions was reaching a deeper level. However, although Kung was thoroughly versed in Buddhist doctrine, his basic motivation of evangelisation drove a critical view of Buddhist beliefs and led him to overlook their value. Shengyen, quick to fight back, also failed to view Christianity objectively. In this atmosphere of mutual criticism and competition, neither religion was able to examine an objective evaluation of the other.

## **Conclusion**

It can thus be concluded that prior the 1970s, the relationship between Buddhism and Christianity was one of divisive tension. Though there was never any direct conflict, these verbal debates maintained both religious negative impressions towards the other. The early debates between Taiwanese Christianity and Buddhism displayed several features. Firstly, Christian churches tend to view other religions as opponents. Second, because Christianity was still viewed as a foreign religion, Taiwanese people were unable to accept it as a part of the domestic Taiwanese culture. Thirdly, the unavoidable competitive element of religious expansion combined with the Christian churches' inappropriate attitudes and methods of evangelisation caused Buddhist antipathy. But, after the 1970s, new social situations provided an opportunity for possible conciliation.

## **A Gradual Conciliation after the 1970s**

Since the 1970s, there has been a gradual release in the tension between Christians and Buddhists. As social and economic conditions have changed, both religions have reconsidered their attitudes to each other. During this period, the works of Father Albert Poulet-Mathis and the development of contextual theology in the PCT exerted some influence in the reduction of hostility between Christianity and Buddhism. But, there were yet other incidents that became a barrier to a greater Christian-Buddhist relationship.

## **Father Albert Poulet-Mathis**

Father Poulet-Mathis played a crucial role in the improvement of Christian and Buddhist relations in his promotion of inter-religious dialogue. He is a Jesuit, and has been a Catholic missionary in Taiwan for over forty years. In an interview, he described how the *Nastra Aetate* of the Second Vatican Council (VCI) opened his



vision for inter-religious dialogue and moved him to begin his personal journey of making friendship with other religions.<sup>19</sup> At first, he asked Master Chanyun (懺雲法師) to teach him meditation and Buddhist belief. Then, he visited various Buddhist temples, joining their rites and meditations so as to enjoy fellowship with them. Moreover, in his position as the advisor to the Catholic Student Association, Fugen Catholic University (輔仁大學, FJCU), he provided opportunities for dialogue between Christian and Buddhist students. However, he notes that at the time he initiated all these Christian-Buddhist dialogue personally and privately, because inter-religious dialogue had not been accepted in the CCT.

In 1990 CE, under the direction of Pope, John Paul II, the CCT established the Commission for Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenical Cooperation (CIDECE) and began the official ministry of inter-religious dialogue in Taiwan. As the acting secretary, Poulet-Mathis visited most of Taiwan's Buddhist organisations and temples, carrying the CCT's banner of friendship towards them. His sincerity and diligence won the friendship and respect of other religious people. In 1994 CE, he participated in founding a cross-religious organisation, The Conference of Religions and Peace in Taiwan (TCRP) and was its president from 1994 to 2000. Under the auspices of this organisation, he gathered together people of different religions to make opportunities for establishing relationships between various religions and to promote inter-religious dialogue.

There are a variety of responses to the works of Poulet-Mathis from people of religion in Taiwan. In interviews, many leaders of 'Humanistic Buddhism' and scholars in Christian churches expressed their respects for him and actions.<sup>20</sup> However, there are interviewees who express that while Poulet-Mathis' works might bring together people from the various religions, these gatherings only helped people establish surface relationships rather than initiating deeper interaction between religions.<sup>21</sup> In terms of encouraging mutual relationships between Christians and Buddhists, Poulet-Mathis' diligence and sincerity did reduce many Buddhist leaders'

<sup>19</sup> The description in these two paragraphs about his works is from Albert Poulet-Mathis (馬天賜), Jesuit priest and former president of Conference of Religions and Peace in Taiwan and former acting secretary of Commission for Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenical Cooperation. Interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Tien Educational Center, Taipei (台北耕莘文教院), 25 November 2002.

<sup>20</sup> These interviewees include Lee Chifu of Chung Hua Institute of Buddhist Study (中華佛學院李志夫), Lu Huisheng of Tzuchi University (慈濟大學盧蕙馨), Chaohui of Horngshi Buddhist College (弘誓佛學院昭慧), Chan Takkong of Fugen Catholic University (輔仁大學陳德光).

<sup>21</sup> At least two Christian leaders mentioned this point. One is Huang Poho of Tainan Theological College and Seminary (台南神學院黃伯和). The other is Zhou Lianhua of World Vision (展望會周聯華).

enmity to the CCT as well as to other Christian churches, and helped reduce the tension between Christians and Buddhists. In this sense, he salted the soil for the possibility of future dialogue.

### **The Ecumenical Influence to PCT**

Since the 1970s, two factors have changed PCT's attitude to other religions. The first is the rise of contextual theology in PCT. Some pioneer theologians, such as Shoki Coe and C. S. Song advocate that Christian churches must closely relate to the Taiwanese context and that Christian theology must seek God from the soil of indigenous beliefs. Their insights inspired PCT to reconsider its relationship to other religions. Although most of the church leaders are still suspicious of religious pluralism, the PCT was generally become more open and friendly to other religions. This attitude was seen in my interviews with PCT's leading figures. When I asked for their perspectives on the Buddhist charity ministries such as Tzuchi, all eight of the PCT interviewees expressed their appreciation to their social services and humbly indicated that Christians should learn from these Buddhists.<sup>22</sup>

The second factor was the influence of the Ecumenical movement. In the 1980s, when the PCT rejoined The World Council of Churches (WCC), some young contextual theologians such as Huang Poho (黃伯和), Chen Nanzhou (陳南州), and Zheng Yangen, played active roles in WCC and the Council of Churches in Asia (CCA). They had opportunities to participate in the two organisations' inter-religious dialogue conferences and brought awareness to their importance. They became the main figures promoting the PCT's inter-religious dialogue. Indeed, Huang not only built up strong relationships with Buddhist leaders such as Lee Chifu (李志夫)<sup>23</sup> but also participated in inter-religious dialogue organisations such as the TCRP. Chen also committed himself to the study of, and the dialogue with, tribal beliefs among aborigines. Their active participation brought about the vision and practices of inter-religious dialogue into the PCT.

### **Two Potential Barriers**

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<sup>22</sup> Among six Presbyterian interviewees, there are at least four that expressed their admiration for Tzuchi's works.

<sup>23</sup> In my interview with Lee, he especially mentioned that Huang is his good friend and that Huang has led the students of Tainan Presbyterian Theological College and Seminary to visit Chung Hua Institute of Buddhist Study. Li Chifu. Interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Chuanghua Institute of Buddhist Study, Jinshang (金山, 中華佛學研究所), 27 December 2002.

### The Discrepancy of Political Standpoint

Although the tension between the two religions had gradually eased, the difference of political standpoint became a new point of contention between the PCT and Buddhism, and even between the PCT and other Christian churches. This political conflict started due to three public statements from the PCT. In the 1970s, Taiwan was facing isolation from the international community and possible invasion from China. Out of a motivation of caring for Taiwanese people's wellbeing, the PCT issued a series of political statements, *The Statement on Our National Fate* (對國是的聲明與建議), *Our Appeal* (我們的呼籲), and *A Declaration of Human Right* (人權宣言).<sup>24</sup> These statements urged the Taiwanese government to work on political reformation and towards declaration of Taiwanese independence, which brought about opposition from government and criticism from other churches and religions. The critics hurt the PCT's members and became a boundary between the PCT and other religions, and even proving divisive between the PCT and other Christian churches.

Seeking the independence of Taiwan, which entails at the very least changing the name of the country from 'Republic of China (ROC)' to 'Republic of Taiwan' and claiming its complete separation from China, has long been the political appeal of the PCT. However, most indigenous Christian churches and Taiwanese religions insist that either Taiwan will eventually reunite with China or argue that Taiwan should retain its current status that is, being pragmatically separated from China but without an official announcement of independence. These divergent perspectives on Taiwan's independence caused yet greater distance between the PCT and other churches and religions. Therefore, the PCT's views hinder the possibility of Christian churches' dialogue with other religions. In an interview with Huang Poho talking about his experiences in inter-religious dialogue, he says that one of the reasons he withdrew from the TCRP was to protest the TCRP's accepting the advocacy of The Conference of Religions and Peace in Asia (ACRP) that the TCRP can only stay in ACRP in the name of a local district of China.<sup>25</sup>

### The Dahang Park (大安公園) Incident

The Dahang Park incident, which happened in 1992 CE, was a conflict between Christians and Buddhists over whether a statue of Kuanyin (觀音), the most popular

<sup>24</sup> The details and significance of these three statements will be presented in the Chapter Six of this thesis.

<sup>25</sup> Huang Poho, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Tainan Presbyterian Theological College and Seminary, 30 October 2002.

Bodhisattva in Chinese Buddhism, should be removed from a newly constructed city park, the Dahang Park. This statue originally had been in the area before the park was constructed. During the construction, the city government discussed where it should be placed. In the beginning, many Buddhist temples knew the government intended to remove this statue, and they tried hard to acquire it and put it in their own temples, because it was made by a famous artist and possesses high artistic value.

Simultaneously, nearby churches proposed that this statue had to be removed from the park because a Buddhist shrine should not be put in a public place. This declaration aroused the Buddhists' objection, who then united and protested that this statue must not be removed. The resulting confrontation saw sit-ins and loud debates. The incident was resolved peacefully when the Christians allowed the statue to remain in the Park, with the provision that it only be viewed as art. Buddhists conceded by promising that no worship or religious rites would be performed before that statue. However, after agreement had been reached, supporters of each group continued to blame their own representatives for over-compromising. This incident incited a chasm between the two religions. In an interview, one pastor, Lin Mingyi (林明義), mentioned that once, when he took a taxi to a church around the park, the taxi driver still angrily blamed this church for its attempts to drive Kuanyin out of the park.<sup>26</sup>

There are several noteworthy points arising from this incident. The principle reason the churches demanded the removal of Kuanyin's statue from Dahang Park is that many churches involved in the dispute believed that such statues are often imbued with spiritual powers. As it happens, the largest church near the park is closely relative of the Pentecostal Church. Because this movement holds the concept that powerful evil spirits exist in every possible place of the cosmos, this church felt that the statue was likely to become associated with the worship of evil spirits and they did not want such evil spirits spreading into a public place. The churches around this area also hold this belief and were united around it. In addition, this appeal became a point of contention between the two religions. Both religions considered the incident's outcome to be important for their future development and, therefore, that they had better not make concessions. The Dahang Park incident raised an important social issue: Was it acceptable to exclusively place a symbol from one religion in a public space intended for use by all citizens? If it is found unacceptable, does a dissenting religion have the right to demand the removal of this statue or the placement of an

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<sup>26</sup> Lin Mingyi (林明義), interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Zhongyi Free Methodist Church (忠義循理會), Fenshang (鳳山), 2 December 2002.

equivalent symbol in the same public space? This event could have been dealt as a social issue, but the churches approached it from the aspect of religion, thereby complicating the issue. The source of conflict stemmed from poor methods of appeals and insufficient communication. In an interview, Zhou Lianghua (周聯華), one of the Christian representatives of the negotiation group, commented that, even though churches did not agree with the statue's placement in the park, it was unwise for Christians to take such divisive actions because they only exacerbated Buddhist enmity and made no contribution to the Christian mission.<sup>27</sup>

## Conclusion

The Works of Poulet-Mathis for the CCT and the development of the PCT's contextual theology helped improve relationships between Buddhism and these two Christian traditions. The development of 'Humanistic Buddhism' also helped Taiwanese Buddhists hold more open-minded views towards Christian churches. This change is shown in the attitudes and responses given by the interviewees of the 'Humanistic Buddhism.' As a Protestant minister, when the researcher visited several organisations of 'Humanistic Buddhism,' I often felt welcomed by their hospitality. Besides, even Christians, who insisted on the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the priority of evangelisation, gradually understood that triumphalism and propagating the gospel through criticism of other religions is not a good way of preaching the gospel.<sup>28</sup> In general, these factors helped Christians and Buddhists gradually reduce the historical tension and march down the path of reconciliation towards the opportunity of Christian-Buddhist dialogue. However, the aforementioned two factors mentioned above demonstrate that there was potential for new tensions and barriers.

## Christian Views of Buddhism

In order to build up a comprehensive picture on the condition of Christian-Buddhist relation, besides investigating the past and present interactions between Christianity and Buddhism, this chapter intends to explore each side's view towards the other to see how these views influence their relationship. In the third

<sup>27</sup> Zhou Lianghua (周聯華), interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in World Vision in Taiwan, Taipei, 26 November 2002.

<sup>28</sup> This idea had been mentioned in the interviews of some MPC's leaders such as Tan Chibin (陳濟民) of China Evangelical Seminary, Yu Jibin (于繼斌) of China Lutheran Seminary, Cai Guosan (蔡國山) of Industry Evangelical Fellowship.



section, the views of Taiwanese Christian Churches on Taiwanese Buddhism and other religions will be analysed according to the data found in the qualitative research. In the beginning, the qualitative research focuses mainly on three Christian traditions in Taiwan, including the CCT, the PCT, and the MPC. In the later period, considering the speedy growth and influence of the Pentecostal movement in Taiwan, the interviewees belonging to this faith have been added. This section describes Christian views on other religions along the distinctions of these four Christian groups.

## **Catholic Church in Taiwan**

### **The Academic Field**

Among the CCT's academic field, Department of Religious Studies (DRS), Fujen Catholic University plays an important role in promoting inter-religious dialogue. The views of this department are adopted by this research as the main sources of understanding the academic views of the CCT. Interviews and the literary sources reveal that their scholars lean towards the view that different religions are simply different paths leading human beings to return to God. In the conclusion of his *Basic Dimension of Inter-religious Dialogue*, Father Joseph Vu, (武金正), a professor at the DRS, claims that:

The primary issue of the inter-religious dialogue is not only to confirm the fact of the multiple faces of religions, but especially to connect them to a relational unity, which is the centre while people move towards the journey of the world's destination through the track of history.<sup>29</sup>

A similar perspective is expressed by Dr. Chan Takkong, the Dean of DRS. In an interview, I asked what he thinks of the Catholic Church's statement of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, and he replied:

In fact, from VCII to the current state, the concept of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* has not been mentioned anymore. This concept has its own context because, at that time, the whole of Europe was Christendom. Now

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<sup>29</sup>The original text is: '宗教交談的重要課題, 不僅肯定宗教多元面目的事實, 尤其重要的是將他們連結成為相關的合一, 而這合一乃是在歷史的軌跡上邁向末世旅程中的焦點事實。' Quoted from Joseph Vu, *The Basic Dimension of Inter-religious Dialogue* (宗教交談的基本面象) in *The Religious Dialogue: Theory and Practice* (宗教交談: 理論與實踐), edit by Huang Hauichiu (黃懷秋主編), Fujen Religious Series (輔大宗教學叢書), Taipei, Taiwan: Wunan Publishing plc (台灣台北: 武南圖書出版公司), 2000, 33.



we should confirm that all religions are equal and all are paths leading to God.<sup>30</sup>

The above perspectives show that the representative theological standpoint of Catholic scholars in the DRS holds the perspective that Christianity and other religions stand equal and that each path is to God.

### The Official View of CCT

Without voicing the similar address as that of the DRS scholars, under the guidance of VCII, the CCT officially holds an open position to other religions. A friendly attitude was revealed in the establishment of the official institutes of inter-religious dialogue in 1990 CE, which will be described in Chapter Three. Additionally, the reports from two conferences on delivering the vision of inter-religious dialogue to the ministers of the Church, 'The Ministries of Education and Inter-religious Dialogue' reveal that officially the CCT clearly confirm the value of other religions. This open attitude is first displayed by the confirmation of the work of God in other religions. In his lecture, 'Evaluating the Evangelical and Pastoral Ministries in the Catholic University through the Constitution of Catholic University,' the president of the FJCU, Lizhen (李震), claims 'we need to conceive that the spirit of Christ exists in Chinese culture' and 'religion is the important origin of Chinese culture.'<sup>31</sup> This claim secures the works of God in Chinese religions. In another speech, Chan Chunshen (張春申) declares that 'In VCII, the Catholic Church has confirmed that all the religions are seeking the ultimate destiny of human beings and appreciates all the positive answers they have found,'<sup>32</sup> which deeply expresses the awareness of

<sup>30</sup> Chan Takkong (陳德光), interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Chan's office, Hsingzhuang (新莊), 25 November 2002. The Chinese text is: '其實從梵二到現在,教會之外無救恩已經不講了,是過去歷史沒有了解清楚,那時背景也不一樣,因為整個歐洲都是教會,現在已經不講了,今天是肯定各宗教是平等的,都可以通向神.'

<sup>31</sup> The Chinese texts are: '我們要體會基督精神在中國文化中的臨在' and '宗教是中國文化重要的泉源之一.' See Lizhen (李震), 'Evaluating the Evangelical and Pastoral Ministries in Catholic University through the Constitution of Catholic University (從天主大學憲章看大學的福傳使命與牧靈工作)' in the handbook of 'The Ministries of Education and Inter-religious Dialogue: The Third Conference of the Inter-Religious Dialogue and Cooperation (教育工作與宗教交談: 宗教交談與合作第三屆講習會)', Zhingshan, Changhua (彰化靜山), 1993, 5.

<sup>32</sup> The Chinese text is: '在梵二大公會議後,教會在各地的福傳工作,也注意當地宗教的價值,並且在面對其他宗教時有了新的態度.' See Chan Chunshen (張春申), 'Catholic University and Inter-religious Dialogue (教會大學與宗教交談),' in the handbook of 'The Ministries of Education and Inter-religious Dialogue: The Third Conference of the Inter-Religious Dialogue and Cooperation (教育工作與宗教交談: 宗教交談與合作第三屆講習會)', Zhingshan, Changhua (彰化靜山), 1993, 5.

the Catholic Church with regard to the value of the other religions.

However, there is still a cautious attitude held by the leading level of the CCT. In the interview with Poulet-Mathis, he mentioned that “Sometimes, Di Gang (狄剛), the Archbishop of Taipei (台北地區總主教), jokes that ‘We worry that someday Father Poulet-Mathis will leave Christianity eventually,’”<sup>33</sup> though obviously Father Mathis claimed that he never had such an idea. This reveals the reserved opinion that the church carries with respect to expressing too open a mind. Nevertheless, compared to the past, the CCT has an open attitude to Taiwanese religions.

### The Local Churches

To understand local church’s views on other Taiwanese religions, the researcher interviewed two local Catholic priests and conversed informally with some lay believers in different areas of southern Taiwan.<sup>34</sup> Since these lay interviewees were generally hesitant about interview, their normal response to the questions the researcher raised was, “I know nothing about this question, you had better to ask the ‘Father’.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, the main sources come from two priests: Father Meng Yiya of ‘the Cathedral of Jesus Our King’ in Fengshan (鳳山耶穌君王堂孟毅亞神父) and Father Shen Rongbing of ‘the Cathedral of the Saviour’ in Kaohsiung (高雄救世主堂申榮濱神父). Further information was obtained by interviewing others, such as Ho Huiqun, the secretary of the CIDEA. Additional literary sources also proved valuable to the researcher in gathering information.

The two priests I interviewed both politely expressed that they welcome and do not reject interaction with Buddhists, because they consider this interaction as opportunity for Christians to learn from other religions. They both politely expressed their appreciation for the social services Buddhism provided, though they indicated that they are not happy with the Buddhist extravagance in temple building. While inquiring about his views on *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, Shen stood firm on the uniqueness of the Christian faith and salvation through Jesus. In the interview, he said: ‘We must not give up our own standpoint for the sake of inter-religious dialogue or

<sup>33</sup> Albert Poulet-Mathis (馬天賜), interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Tien Educational Center, Taipei (台北耕莘文教院), 26 December 2002. The Chinese text is: “狄主教有時會開玩笑說, ‘我們最擔心那一天馬神父離開天主教了.’”

<sup>34</sup> Basically these lay interviewees are not comfortable giving their names or do not want their names being known. In order to respect their privacy, this thesis does not intend to list their names here. These lay interviewees are aged and mostly female without being well educated. They are basically shy and hesitate to answer my questions.

<sup>35</sup> The Chinese text is: ‘這個我們(我)不懂,你最好去問神父.’

maintaining the relationship with other religions...I want to reiterate the monotheism and the uniqueness of soteriology.<sup>36</sup>

Meng held to the finality of the Christian faith. He claimed that 'all religions are different paths leading to the same door.' When I asked 'whether every religion can open this door', he said 'only through accepting Jesus can one enter this door, but you have the freedom to accept or not.'<sup>37</sup> Throughout the above conversation, he expressed the view that religions exist as a preparation for people to convert to Christianity. Both priests clearly expressed their objection to the concept of religious syncretism, and pointed out the obvious differences of doctrine between Christianity and the other religions. Both insisted that Christians could not compromise the uniqueness of their beliefs for the sake of inter-religious dialogue. Nevertheless, both priests affirmed that there is goodness in other faiths from which Christians can learn.

According to Ho Huiqun, priests' views on other religions are widely divergent. While describing the priests' responses to CCT's dialogue with other religions in interviews, she said:

When other religions asked Father Poulet-Mathis to invite other priests and lay Christians to participate in their activities, some bishops and priests expressed their supports for these activities, but there were also some expressing that these religions were superstitions or that there were evil spirits within them.<sup>38</sup>

It is clear that there are still some priests who hold extra-religions suspicions.

The above data drawn from interviews reveal that churches and their priests hold a courteous, tolerant attitude to other religions, but still maintain suspicions. And despite their polite attitude, the insistence of Christian uniqueness and finality of the salvation of God is still widespread among the local churches. It is this in particular, when compared with the leading level and the academics, illustrates that the CCT's

<sup>36</sup> Shen Rongbing, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in The Cathedral of the Saviour, Kaohsiung, 12 December 2002. The Chinese text is: '不能爲了宗教交談或關係,放棄自己的立場,我認爲該堅持執著的,不能放棄...我要重申的是一神論和救恩論.'

<sup>37</sup> Meng Yiya, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in the Cathedral of Jesus Our King, Kaohsiung, 10 December 2002. Related Chinese texts include: 孟:'路很多,門只有一個.' 潘:'這些不同的路都引到同一個門嗎?' 孟:'帶到這個門,你要接受救主,你接不接受是你的自由.'

<sup>38</sup> Ho Huiqun, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Commission of Inter-religious Dialogue and Ecumenical Cooperation, Taipei, 18 December 2002. The Chinese text is: '如別의宗教有活動,請馬神父邀請我們的神父教友參加,有的主教神父就很支持,有的神父乾脆跟馬神父說,這些宗教都是迷信,還有的神父怕和他們交往,會有邪靈的作用,因爲他們只相信獨一の真神.'

local churches behave more conservatively in their views on other religions.

## Conclusion

Previously, the Catholic Church harboured suspicion towards other religions, but, in light of the above evidence, there is now a reflective courteousness. The CCT expresses its confirmation of the value of other Taiwanese religions due to the influence of the World Catholic Church since VCII. There is the tendency in the CCT in which the theologians hold a more open attitude than that of the local churches. The theologians hold to religious pluralism, claiming that other religions can provide salvation for human beings. The churches, though parroting their confirmation and good will towards other religions, still maintain an orthodox exclusivity of salvation. What is more is the sentiment of the leading levels in display of a more open attitude mere so than the local churches. This shows that the transformation of the CCT's attitude to other religions is handed down from upper demonstration rather than grown from the grass roots. In examining the theological value of other religions, the interviewees consider the difference between doctrines to factor negatively, while the contribution of religions to society is naturally viewed as a positive factor. In general, though, the CCT demonstrates friendliness to other Taiwanese religions.

## The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

Unlike the Catholic Church, which possesses a strong hierarchy and united theology, the PCT has a stronger democratic side, with widely divergent theological standpoint and activities. To date, the Church's views on other religions has not been raised and discussed in the PCT's General Assembly, nor is there any commonly held view. As the interviews will demonstrate, all the PCT interviewees stated that their opinions spoke only for their personal views.

## Academics

This qualitative research presents the overall influence of pioneer theologians upon the PCT's academic sphere. There are slightly different views of two interviewees on the issues. Huang Poho and Zheng Yangen, are two leading theologians in their respective mainstream PCT theological seminaries, the Tainan and the Taiwan Theological College and Seminary. Their views represent the typical perspective in the academy on the issue. During the interview, Huang Poho said, 'Christianity as the product of human culture should not be viewed as standing in a

specific place among the religions.<sup>39</sup> He faintly echoed the Catholic view that all religions are paths leading people to God and that the mission of converting people from their own religions to the Church is a mission arising from the Church itself rather than Jesus' commission.<sup>40</sup> His opinions reveal a most open attitude, claiming that different religions including Christianity are the various paths leading people to God.

Zheng Yangen holds a rather reserved view regarding the issue of religion's path to God. His attitude is due to his founding in the discrepancy between Christianity and other institutional religions. He said "It is easy to find parallels between Christianity and aboriginal beliefs in the concept of 'the Most High' and the concept of creation. However, one thing that troubles me is I am not certain that there is a parallel between Christianity and other traditional world religions, because each has its distinctive beliefs, organisations, rites and history."<sup>41</sup> In terms of whether there is path of salvation in other beliefs, he cautiously expressed:

The only thing that I affirm is there is a clear path to salvation within Christianity...it is hard to affirm that Christianity and other traditional religions lead to a common destiny, for there are obvious differences between them. However, I respect the spirituality in other religions and their claims that people can find a destiny through these religions.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> This concept was indicated in an interview, when he mentioned that once when he attended an international conference, he had different perspective than a Dutch theologian regarding whether religions are human products and whether Christianity belongs to one of them. Huang Poho, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Tainan Presbyterian Theological College and Seminary, 30 October 2002. Its Chinese text is: '基督教和世界的諸多宗教是一樣是個文化的產物,不應被獨特的對待.'

<sup>40</sup> In terms of this issue, in interviews, he said that the motivation of the mission is the Great Commission (Matthew. 28:18-20). However, whether the Great Commission was given by Jesus Christ or was developed by early Church later, recent New Testament scholars held the perspective different from the traditional perspective. Therefore, the concept of mission in the Bible is not the same as evangelisation. Huang Poho, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Tainan Presbyterian Theological College and Seminary, 30 October 2002. Its Chinese text is: '宣教士的宣教的基本動機是來自大使命,這個大使命究竟真是耶穌說的,或是初代教會發展出來的,這個現代新約詮釋學者有不同以往的解釋,所以聖經的宣教的觀念和傳福音是不是等同,是有需要重新考慮的.'

<sup>41</sup> Zheng Yangen, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Taiwan Theological College and Seminary, 20 November 2002. The Chinese text is: '我認為基督教和原住民傳統宗教較容易相容,因為傳統宗教都有至高者,創造的觀念,這和長老會的觀念是相容的...但是對我而言,比較大的困擾是世界大宗教,我發現不容易,因為他本身有自己的教義,組織,儀式,也有一個長遠的歷史和傳統.'

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. The Chinese text is: '我很清楚基督教信仰有一套明確的道路..這條有啓示的真理在其中,是在歷史上看到效驗的,我以我很清楚這是神所設立的管道,但是這個管道以外,神有沒有另外的管道,我不能說絕對沒有,我也尊重世界宗教宣稱他們在他們信仰中找到一條拯救的路.'



Huang's comment reveals that within the academics of the PCT, it is acceptable that different religions can be various paths to God. But, this is not the only perspective as there are theologians who are suspicious of religious pluralism.

### Local Churches' Pastors

The qualitative research discovered that local pastors also held a divergent standpoint with regard to the uniqueness of Christianity. Two of the four interviewed pastors affirmed that other religions could lead people to God in their chosen path. Using one of these pastor's ideas<sup>43</sup> as an example, he said, 'In Taiwan, the good works of Chengyen make many Christians rethink the problem: Can we still insist that this Buddhist cannot be saved by God?'<sup>44</sup> The other two persisted in the belief of the unique salvation of Jesus Christ. The interviewees all affirm that there is goodness in Buddhism, and they give especially high praise of Buddhist contributions to society.

### Lay People

The PCT's lay leaders play active and influential roles in the Church. The qualitative research shows that PCT's lay leaders held more conservative perspectives on the issues. This impression was not only affirmed in my interviews with two lay leaders but also in the statement of two PCT's pastors, Huang Poho and Chang Lifu (張立夫). In the interview, Huang indicated that 'Most lay Christians hold conservative standpoints and negative views about other religions.'<sup>45</sup>

My two lay interviewees, Chen Zhaonan (陳兆男) and Ms. Xu Sufen (許素芬), are both leaders of local churches and active participants in many ministries. The interviews showed that both interviewees were of the mind that there is uniqueness to the salvation of Jesus Christ and there is the priority of evangelisation. As Chen Zhaonan said, 'To obtain eternal life, there is no other way but through Jesus Christ. This is the foundation of our belief and is the contradiction between Christianity and Buddhism.'<sup>46</sup> In terms of their views about other religions, both interviewees agreed

<sup>43</sup> This pastor had mentioned that he would hesitate to relate some contents of our conversation to other pastors so that he won't provoke their objections. Therefore, I considered it appropriate to conceal his name here. The Chinese text is '像我跟你說的這些說法,有時還要看人說.'

<sup>44</sup> The Chinese text is: '以台灣的現象,証嚴的表現,讓很多基督徒無法不面對我們還能堅持教會以外無救恩.'

<sup>45</sup> Huang Poho, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Tainan Presbyterian Theological College and Seminary, 30 October 2002. The Chinese text is: '一般信徒是大多數站在較保守的立場,對他宗教站在負面的態度.'

<sup>46</sup> Chen Zhaonan, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in the office of the Village of Evangelical Fellowship, Tainan, 15 December 2002. The Chinese text is: '要得到永生,不靠耶穌基督是沒有別的'



with the pastors by affirming the goodness within these religions and specifically Buddhist contributions to Taiwanese society. However, they rejected the possibility of these religious people being saved through their chosen faith.

### The General Assembly

The diversity of the issues of inter-religious dialogue among different PCT interviewees causes the leadership level to hold a cautious attitude towards affirmation of the other religions' goodness. In the interview, Rev. Lo Jonkuang (羅榮光), the general secretary of the General Assembly of PCT, said:

I myself still consider that there is God's general revelation in other religions, but only Christianity owns God's special revelation. These two levels of revelation contain substantial differences. Furthermore, I hold the conviction that Jesus Christ is the only salvation for human beings.<sup>47</sup>

He also said 'most PCT churches hold the belief of the uniqueness of the salvation of Jesus' and 'the PCT still maintains a comprehensive ministry including evangelisation and social ministry. Especially at the time when the Church is in the minority, evangelisation, leading people to conversion and to be baptised, is the PCT's primary ministry.'<sup>48</sup> Lo not only expressed his own conviction but also, to certain degree, expressed the general theological standpoint of PCT.

### Conclusion

Currently, the PCT's view on other religions is influenced by both contextual and conservative theology. This causes a diversity of views with regard to the issues of qualitative research within the PCT. Academics holds the most open mind about the possibility of dialogue with local churches insisting on the supremacy of Christianity in achieving God's salvation. Amongst the diversities, there is a shared view between the different levels of the PCT, which is the confirmed goodness in other religions stemming from their contributions to human this-worldly wellbeing.

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路,這是我們的基本立場,也是我們和佛教在救恩論上的衝突.'

<sup>47</sup> Lo Jonkuang, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in General Assembly of PCT, Taipei, 8 January 2003. The Chinese text is: '我本身仍然認為其他宗教中有神的一般啓示,但是只有基督教信仰有神特殊的啓示,有其本質的不同,我仍然相信耶穌基督是唯一的拯救.'

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. The Chinese text is: '因此我們強調基督教信仰的獨特性,唯有耶穌是唯一的救主...我們的教會強調整全福音包括社會關懷和領主歸主,特別在教會在社會中的少數時,帶人受洗和教會增長是目前宣教最優先的工作.'

## **Mandarin Protestant Church**

Although the MPC is composed of numerous Protestant denominations, they commonly hold the evangelical theological standpoint. This field research concises fifteen individual interviews and a panel discussion with eight participants.<sup>49</sup> The evidence shows that there is no difference among interviewees of different denominations and those of different levels of Christians in the Church in their positions on the uniqueness of Christian salvation and on the priority of evangelisation. The differences that exist lie mainly in their views on the value of seeking human this-worldly welfare, which affects their views on other Taiwanese religions. The diversity is not between the levels of church hierarchy and denominations, but between the local churches and the para-church organisations, which play active roles in the MPC. It is especially these leaders of para-church organisations that hold an open mind towards other religions, and with emphasis on their social contributions.

### **Views on Social Services of 'Humanistic Buddhism'**

In interviews, ten of the thirteen MPC interviewees held a critical view on the revival of Buddhism in Taiwan and on its social services. Seven of them succinctly stated that Buddhists do not do quite as many good works as the general perceives. The impression that they make great contributions to the community is corollary to their good media relations. Following that, the interviewees usually claimed that, in fact, Christians do social services no less than Buddhists have done, but Christians follow the principles of 'do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.'<sup>50</sup> Four of them responded that, though Buddhists do lots of social services in Taiwan, their works are shallow, such as donating money for charity, and are lack an effective strategy to solve the fundamental problems of the society and of the individual. Only two of thirteen interviewees gave Buddhists sincere praise and believed that Christians can learn from their good works. These responses showed that overall MPC Christians evaluated Buddhist social services with bias and held a competitive attitude without objectively recognising the goodness within them.

### **Views on Non-Christian Religions**

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<sup>49</sup> Not every interviewee was asked or answered the same questions, so, in the following statistics, the total numbers of the interviewees in the statistics are different.

<sup>50</sup> Matthew 6:3 (NIV)

Christian views on non-Christian religions were closely related to their views on contemporary Buddhist revival. Almost no interviewees denied that there is a certain good in these religions' doctrines and practices, and so they affirmed that these religions might make contributions to human life and society. Conversely though, all the MPC interviewees insisted that these religions can only contribute to human this-worldly wellbeing, but lack the ability to lead people towards salvation.

The MPC's views on the value of other religions are also tied to their views on the value of this world. Three of fourteen interviewees held the most negative view, claiming that the present human world is completely valueless, and by extension, non-Christian religions are completely valueless. Seven of fourteen held a milder but similar view asserting that the wellbeing of this world is of only secondary value, and thus, the value of non-Christian religions is secondary. Only four interviewees affirmed the value of this-worldly wellbeing and claimed that to promote this-worldly wellbeing is one of the core features in Christian belief. This third group of interviewees ended in affirming the value of non-Christian religions' contributions to this world. The statistics showed that interviewees of the MPC generally view the value of this world as less important. As a sample group they shows that, though interviewees in the MPC generally confirmed the contributions of religions to this world, they generally hold the perspective that non-Christian religions are of less value, for the contribution to this world has less value.

### **Pentecostal Churches**

Besides these three Christian traditions, the recent revival of the Pentecostal movement in Taiwan is worth consideration, due to its success in revival and influence upon Taiwanese Churches. This movement was greatly motivated by the Pentecostal movements in South America, Korea, and Singapore. This Christian movement does not establish its own denomination, but is dispersed among two Protestant traditions. Two ministers and one lay Christian accepted the interviews possibly helped by which two incidents which happened recently clarified the Pentecostal Christians' view on the issues, which will be shown by the qualitative research that they hold very negative views towards other religions.

### **Views on Other Religions**

Pentecostal Christians in Taiwan believe that all the non-Christian religions contain evil spirits inherent in their doctrines and practices. This perspective thwarts

establishing relationships with other religions and even spurns Pentecostals to take opposing actions to them. Along with Dahang Park Incident, there was another event at the end of 2001 CE that evidenced their hostile attitudes to other religions. At that time, Pentecostal Christians launched a parade through the whole Taiwan with the purpose of 'cleansing' the evil spirits in shrines and temples. As they passed particular temples, some of these Christians poured oil on the outside statues so as to drive out the evil spirits. These acts both damaged some temple statues and nearly brought about lawsuits. While interviewing the two ministers, I asked them<sup>51</sup> how they viewed this event. In the beginning, one minister said, 'Christians should pray but should not take such violent actions to oppose other religions.' But, the other said later that 'Today is the age of Elijah. If God wants Christians to confront idols in the manner of Mount Carmel in 1 King 19, we have no other choice because this is not an issue of opposition but of the crucial moment of the revival.'<sup>52</sup> This statement shows the attitude of confrontation that exists among Pentecostal Christians. This attitude, by nature, leads to the possibility of direct opposition.

The above details from the interviewees and the two events reveal that Pentecostal Christians in Taiwan hold a strong opposition to other religions. Although this movement is in its infancy in Taiwan, achieving appeal in the last two decades, the reality of its quick growth has evolved as a potential barrier to Christian interaction with other Taiwanese religions.

## Conclusion

After examining the views of various Taiwanese Christian traditions on other religions, it can be concluded that, in general, Christians view on other religions much friendlier than in previous eras. Nevertheless, the gradual improvement of Christians' views on other religions has not impelled Christians to positively seek the establishment of a relationship between Christianity and Buddhism. This improvement is only viable in the easing of previous tension and an attitude of courteous neglect for other religions. The factors of the release of previous tension include the influences of world Churches and contemporary theology, and the Church's sense of obligation to the local community needs. However, the underlying

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<sup>51</sup> In this interview, I promised I would not list their names in my thesis.

<sup>52</sup> The Chinese text of the first opinion is: one said: '如果我要採取一些行動, 我可以禱告, 但不要對立。' and the other said: '當然今天是以利亞的時代, 如果要走到迦密山的時候, 也必需走了, 我們講的不是對立不對立的問題, 而是講到一個復興的關鍵。'

conviction of the uniqueness of Christian beliefs, the differences of beliefs between two religions, and the sense of competition, still impede Christian Churches in Taiwan from seeking an established friendship with Buddhism. One feature popular among different traditions in Taiwanese Christianity is to express their confirmation of Buddhists' social services and contributions to the society. How they view the value of this-worldly contribution is variably influenced by the respective views on the worth of social services dictated among different Christian traditions. This situation encouragingly provides a possible source for the contact point for the Christian-Buddhist relationship in Taiwan.

### **Buddhist Views of Christianity**

After examining Christian views on other religions, this fourth section seeks to discover the views of Taiwanese Buddhists on Christianity. The first chapter has already indicated the recent transformation of Buddhism in Taiwan, which evolved into the two main Buddhist communities in Taiwan named traditional Buddhism and 'Humanistic Buddhism'. The interviews, which were performed with these two communities intended to maintain a balance in the number of interviewees in each group. In traditional Buddhism, there are eight interviewees in total, including three clergy and five lay people. In 'Humanistic Buddhism,' there are also eight. Five are clergy or scholars, mainly the leaders or representatives of Humanistic Buddhist institutions. The other three are lay people. The last interviewee, Jiang Chanteng claimed himself to be an independent Buddhist scholar, lacking affiliation with any Buddhist institution.

### **Traditional Buddhism**

There are three traditional Buddhist leaders and five lay people who accepted the researcher's interviews. The valuable data was mainly from the views of Buddhist leaders, because lay interviewees in traditional Buddhism, like those of the lay in the CCT, expressed a hesitant attitude in responding to the interview questions. Among the five, there were only two, who felt comfortable enough to have a long conversation with me though one of these remained anonymous and refused a tape recording. Three other interviewees were uncomfortable answering my questions and referred me to their masters because they knew nothing of these issues. This reveals that in traditional Buddhism, the strong monastic class dominates all the Buddhist sects, and the lay people are their subordinates.

## Views on Other Religions and Christianity

Three monastic interviewees expressed friendly attitudes towards Christianity. They admired Christians' good deeds and contributions to society. However, according to the Buddhist belief system, they commonly put Christian beliefs within the realm of humans and heaven, meaning that, through the fruits of Christians' good deeds, after the end of their present life, their merits will help them be able to attain one of the heavenly realms, those which are the highest realms in the six realms of Buddhist concept of cosmos,<sup>53</sup> and to enjoy happiness there. Besides Christians, other religious people may obtain this realm as well. This means that the value of these religions is not decided in their beliefs but in their good deeds. This evaluation shows that other religions have a rather good position in Buddhism.

The living beings in heaven can enjoy their happiness for a long but limited time. After the fruits of their merits are exhausted, these living beings fall back to other lower realms and keep on their journey of Saṃsāra. As staying in the heavenly realm does not mean escaping out of Saṃsāra and total release from the sufferings of life, the Christian path can not help much in terms of an ultimate release.

Traditional Buddhist interviewees gave Christianity a pretty good evaluation, for they admired Christian virtues and asserted that Christians can acquire a certain level of happiness in the heavenly realm. Therefore, there was an absence of Buddhist obligation to urge Christians towards conversion. They are not impelled to bring tension between the two religions. However, since these traditional Buddhists insisted that Buddhism is the only religion which can grant complete release from suffering, they cannot avoid the exclusivity and therefore superiority of Buddhism.

## A View of a Lay Buddhist on Christians

A friendlier attitude is displayed in an interview of an unnamed lay interviewee.<sup>54</sup> She expressed her experiences of working with a Christian in a common volunteer service centre for the terminal patients in the Kaohsiung General Veteran Hospital (高雄榮民總醫院). Although their beliefs were different, they get along well and

<sup>53</sup> In Buddhist cosmology, there are numerous sub-realms in each of six realms. There are no common opinions regarding which sub-realm Christians can attain. It might be based on the merits a Christian collects.

<sup>54</sup> An unnamed lay Buddhist, interviewed by Jutta Pan, in the garden of Hsiangkuang Zhangyang Temple (香光莊嚴寺), Kaohsiung, interviewed without being taped, 21 December 2002.



respected each other's beliefs during their work. Their commitment to caring for the sick and the happy experiences in their work afforded also generated of friendship across the boundaries of religion. This experience let her realise how Christians express their love. She admitted that there are differences between religions in their paths to human final destiny, but, when she focused on their common concern for people's worldly welfare, she believed that it was no problem to live and work with a Christian friend.

This interview was a special case in my interview with traditional Buddhists. In the four other lay Buddhist interviews, when I asked whether they have Christian friends and how their relationships are, their immediate responses were that they seldom had Christian friends for these Christians are not part of them. When pressed, they would politely respond that Christians are good people. These interviews show that for traditional Buddhists it is hard to accept Christians, but the above special case shows that a focus on human welfare helps different believers transcend religious lives and come to accept and respect each other.

#### Views on Humanistic Buddhism and Its Social Engagement

The rise of the Humanistic Buddhist movement is an extraordinary transformation for Buddhism in Taiwan, and it is interesting to examine the views of traditional Buddhists on this new movement. Interviews with traditional Buddhists included questions about the interviewees' current views on Humanistic Buddhists and their social actions. These interviewees generally responded with the position that the worth of good deeds is secondary to Buddhist beliefs. They commonly claimed that the goal of Buddhism is to attain Nirvāṇa, which is the search of ultimate release from this-worldly suffering and endless Saṃsāra. Basic paths to attain this goal are followed through meditation or calling on the name of Buddha. In terms of good deeds, unless one has experienced Nirvāṇa in this world or become a Bodhisattva, good deeds only help a person to earn merit so as to obtain an immediate reward in this life or to acquire a better reincarnation. Moreover, focusing on good deeds might even cause one to overlook the practice of meditation. In this, good deed can even inhibit people's realisation of Nirvāṇa. Since engaging in this world can easily leads to human craving, Buddhists contend that people should make every effort to withdraw from this world so as not to be polluted by it. Interviewers were of the mind that positively engaging in this world, though altruistic, is not the centre of Buddhist teachings.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> The above description is mainly derived from the interviews with Master Ruchi. Two other masters of

Traditional Buddhism views the Humanistic Buddhist focus on good deeds and this-world engagement to be at the entry level of Buddhist practices. The most negative view on 'Humanistic Buddhism' is from Ruchi. He said, "'Humanistic Buddhism' contains a danger of blocking people from attaining Nirvāṇa because focusing on this worldly engagement might cause people to pay less attention to higher level practices and to be polluted by this secular world."<sup>56</sup> One milder view was from Huiyang. In an interview, she did not maintain that the rise of 'Humanistic Buddhism' hinders people from attaining Nirvāṇa, but said, 'although caring for this-worldly wellbeing is not the centre of the Buddhist Dharma, it contains a function for people to start and to be more willing to learn Buddhist Dharma. Nevertheless, after starting to learn Dharma, the followers have to be guided to escape from this world.'<sup>57</sup> In an interview, an unnamed monk said, 'the practices of social engagement are the strategies of self-adaptation to fit the context in the propagation of Dharma. This practice is especially suitable for young people and intellectuals in the modern era.'<sup>58</sup> These three similarly express the belief that 'Humanistic Buddhism' does not stand in the centre of Buddhist Dharma works best as an initial step into greater Buddhist practices.

## Conclusion

One underlying character in Taiwanese traditional Buddhism is its regard to the good deeds and socially engaged actions, which are intrinsically valued as secondary to Buddhist beliefs. Therefore, they admire the good deeds of Christians but consider them as secondary. This evaluation is also applied to their views on 'Humanistic Buddhism'. They do not denigrate the value of other religions such as Christianity, but like the Christians, they hold to the uniqueness and superiority of their faith, believing that only through traditional Buddhist practices can people attain Nirvāṇa. They hold a

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traditional Buddhism basically expressed similar concepts. Lay interviewees basically hesitated to answer these questions, only saying that this question should be answered by their masters.

<sup>56</sup> Ruchi (如濟), interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Kaihui Private Temple (開慧精舍), Zhongli (中壢), 18 November 2002. The Chinese text is: '如果太強調行善, 反而會妨礙修持, 人間佛教目前有這種趨勢, 而且我認為過度的世俗化, 過度的世俗化以後, 佛教慢慢, 我們是擔心...過分的俗化後, 人間淨土反而沒有辦法成就了.'

<sup>57</sup> Huiyang (慧嚴), interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Lotus Buddhist Group, Fengshang, 19 December 2002. The Chinese text is: '在佛教, 這是一個入門, 終極還是要邁向涅槃, 以一般信徒來說, 入門是追求現世利益, 一旦入門以後, 還是希望慢慢引導你向解脫煩惱的境界.'

<sup>58</sup> This unnamed master does not want to his name listed publicly. The Chinese text is: '這是根據眾生不同的根器而採取不同的方法, 向現在針對年青人和有學識的人, 投入現世和參與人間淨土的方式是重要的.'

courteous attitude to Christians in their statements but deny their value in terms of a final destiny.

### **‘Humanistic Buddhism’**

Ideally the founders of four main Humanistic Buddhist complexes and Yinshun were the main subjects of the researcher’s interviews, for they were those who have the authority to speak for ‘Humanistic Buddhism.’ In reality, it was not possible for these leaders to spare their time to accept an interview from a Christian seminary student. However, the researcher interviewed some Buddhist scholars who were very close to these leaders and who were considered to be spokespersons for them. Professor Li Chihfu (李志夫), for example, is the director of the CIBS, which was founded by Master Shenyen of Dharma Drum Mountain. He has worked with Shengyen in the CIBS for many years. Professor Lu Huisheng (盧蕙馨), is the professor of Religious Studies, Tzuchi University and was recommended by Tzuchi to be the spokesperson for Master Chengyen. Master Chaohui is considered to be one of the successors of Yinshun. Jiang Chanteng is the scholar, who first named the thinking of Yinshun as ‘Humanistic Buddhism.’ There were interviewees who were Buddhist lay people belonging to two other groups of Humanistic groups, Buddha Light and Middle Taiwan Mountain. Unlike traditional Buddhist lay people, these lay Buddhists have in common, a higher education and are socio-economically middle class. There were also two leaders of modern Buddhist groups accepting my interviews. They are Li Yuansong (李元松), the founder of Modern Chan Society (現代禪, MCS), and Master Yang, the leader of Chinese Chan Buddhist Association (中國禪學會, CCBA).

The information obtained from interview shows that there was little difference between the Humanistic Buddhists and the traditional Buddhists on their views that Christianity only belongs to the realm of heaven in Buddhist belief. However, Humanistic Buddhist interviewees expressed this view in a more courteous and respectful way. When asked whether Buddhists hold the view that Christians can only attain the realm of heaven, only Li Yuansong said that this concept is too arbitrary and does not respect other religions.<sup>59</sup> One of the other five interviewees laid out the standard concepts within traditional Buddhism. Besides them, four<sup>60</sup> avoided responding to this question directly but claimed that religions should respect each

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<sup>59</sup> Li Yuansong (李元松), interviewed by Jutta Pan, accompanied by Leu Yizhong, tape recording in Modern Chan Society, Taipei (台北, 現代禪象山社區), 18 December 2002.

<sup>60</sup> There were six Humanistic Buddhist interviewees that were asked this question.

other. Their polite silence construed their basic agreement with this concept.

Although holding the superiority of Buddhism over Christianity, almost all interviewees of 'Humanistic Buddhism,' at the same time, expressed different attitudes from traditional Buddhists in their praise for the goodness of Christianity. They uniformly claimed that all religions are good and valuable to this world. They also appreciated Christians' good deeds and their contributions to Taiwan throughout its history. Even though four of six interviewees still insisted that only Buddhism could lead people to an ultimate release from sufferings, they expressed respect for the differences in Christian and Buddhist belief. As Li Chifu said, 'It is all right that each religion has different beliefs. I might have my own convictions, but I bless your choice. If you don't bless my beliefs, it's all right for me.'<sup>61</sup> Overall, interviewees of 'Humanistic Buddhism' expressed a more open attitude and a greater appreciation of other religions than those from traditional Buddhism. This evaluation might be closely related to their strong conviction for this-worldly wellbeing. In this, they appreciated the value of Christian faith and social services, and to the continuing contributions made to Taiwan, this all being affirmed by the continuous mentioning of the interviewees. Not every Humanistic Buddhist held this attitude; when I demanded interviews from some other Buddhist leaders, I was rejected by two Humanistic Buddhist leaders. The reason for the refusal was that they were not interested in these issues, or in dialogue with a Christian. Therefore, by design, the institutions accepting my interviews were tended to be those who have a friendlier attitude to Christianity.

The above paragraph shows the commonality among these interviewees in their high valuation of this-world. Monastic interviewees still claimed that seeking release from this suffering world ultimate Buddhist goal, but at the same time they noted the importance of Buddhist this-world engagement. The Buddhist scholars and lay people focused their religious goals on earthly self-fulfillment while paying less attention to the attainment of ultimate human destiny, or simply regarded it as an unknown. The interviews also hint at a sense of superiority, but because they hold a high view of good deeds and this-worldly value, they are generally positive towards Christianity.

## Conclusion

Information from qualitative research shows that Buddhists' views on

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<sup>61</sup> Li Chifu (李志夫), interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Chunghwa Institute of Buddhist Study, Chinshan (金山), 27 December 2002. The Chinese text is: '信仰不同, 那沒有關係, 你相信你自己的, 基督教相信永生, 我們祝福, 佛教相信涅槃, 你不祝福, 那沒有關係.'

Christianity in Taiwan are similar with Christians' views on Buddhism. While historical tension has decreased, what remains is a courteous neglect in Buddhist views on establishing the relationship with Christians. Convictions of superiority in monopolising the paths towards human release from suffering and the doctrinal differences between the two religions contribute to this alienation. At the same time, the affirmation of views on the value of this-worldly human welfare and religions' social services are the crucial factors for some Buddhist traditions' views on Christianity and lay important groundwork for establishing friendships with Christians. The qualitative research shows that though traditional Buddhism in Taiwan might give a certain level of affirmation to Christianity, because of their low valuation of social engagement, the alienation is increased. And while 'Humanistic Buddhism' possesses a similar concept of Buddhist superiority, they are more open-minded and willing to establish friendships with Christians, due in part to the confirmation of previous Christian social ministries in Taiwan. The research reveals a promise for the two religions in Taiwan to establish their relationship through common social work in promoting the wellbeing of Taiwanese people and society.

### **Conclusion**

The qualitative research on which this chapter is based gives a full picture of Christian-Buddhist relationship in Taiwan. Although there has never been a history of direct conflict or violence between Christians and Buddhists in Taiwan, relations between the two religions bear the weight of a legacy of competition and mutual suspicion that produces a continuing state of tension. Since the 1970s, the relationship of Christianity and Buddhism has gradually improved as each religion has come to recognise the demands of a living in the situation of religious plurality. However, this remains more evidenced in the flock of individual Christians and Buddhists than of either religion as a whole. There are still factors that impede the intention of each religious people to dialogue with the other. It seems fair to conclude, that, although Christianity and Buddhism in Taiwan have recently shown a tolerance towards one another, factors such as a sense of uniqueness, mutual suspicion, and doctrinal differences have retarded greater interaction.

Tension between Christianity and Buddhism in Taiwan was unavoidable when the two religions first encountered each other especially coming from their different cultural backgrounds. During their subsequent histories in Taiwan, each tend to live in isolation from the other, illustrating the conceptual analysis offer in Chapter One: that

as Taiwanese religions approximate the separatist pole of the syncretist/separatist spectrum, they tended also to emphasise their ideological differences. In the case of Taiwanese Christianity and Buddhism this produced an emphasis on differences of belief and of mutual suspicion, and these have, in turn, exacerbated cultural tensions. The sense of competition between the two religions created a reality of latent, if not actual conflict. In recent years, however, the increase of social interaction that has become a daily normality in Taiwan as a whole means that Taiwanese Christians and Buddhists have more open mind towards the other, and have encouraged each to have a more opportunity to meet each other. This has created an environment in which practical interaction is no longer a rarity. As a result, some Christians and Buddhists are beginning to see a need to re-consider their relationship with each other, though at a corollary mutual suspicions and competition have yet to be eliminated, and to a certain degree continues to act as an alienating factor.

But the situation is not completely pessimistic. The relationship between the two religions has gradually improved and continues to improve. The interviews with Taiwanese Christians and Buddhists show that there is a level of appreciation in each religion for the other's commitment and contribution to the wellbeing of the Taiwanese people and society as a whole. This suggests that the way forward in building more constructive relations between Taiwanese Christians and Buddhists lies in the area of shared social concern for the wellbeing of people in this world, or in the humanistic rather than metaphysical dimensions of religious belief.



## **Chapter Three**

### **The State and Assessment of Christian-Buddhist Dialogue in Taiwan**

#### **Introduction**

As the sequel to Chapter Two that examined the general state of Christian-Buddhist relations in Taiwan, Chapter Three explores the record of Christian-Buddhist dialogue, where the term 'dialogue' implies a conscious attempt on the part of Taiwanese Christians and Buddhists, both as individuals and institutions, to interact in constructive ways that make for greater doctrinal understanding, spiritual appreciation, and ethical co-operation. This is a subject on which there is almost no writings by Taiwan scholars, and the analysis offered in this chapter is based, as in was Chapter Two, on qualitative research through interviews with Taiwanese Christians and Buddhists, who have participated in inter-religious dialogue and who were willing to discuss their experiences.

The chapter begins with a review of the recent history of the past fifty years in which Christian and Buddhist institutions first initiate inter-religious dialogue, but more particularly, the history of the last fifteen since, in which Christian-Buddhist dialogue really got off the ground. The material will be presented under several headings. The first of which evaluates the work of the few established Taiwanese institutes that promote inter-religious dialogue, the comparison here being made between institutions that promote dialogue in support of government policies, and those promote bilateral dialogue between religious communities. The second reviews the actual dialogue in the form of specially organised events for inter-religious encounter. The third explores ways in which a dialogue is understood by Christians and Buddhists, through respective interviews. Through these three lenses, the first half of the chapter offers a detailed analysis of the history and current state of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan.

Various typologies for inter-religious dialogue have been proposed by scholars and conciliar organisations. While bearing these in mind, the researcher has adhered to a methodological approach of allowing interviewees to speak for themselves, and of drawing conclusions from the oral evidence rather than imposing conclusions on the evidence which is imported from other sources. This approach yields three forms of Christian-Buddhist dialogue. The first of which is the dialogue of doctrine in which Christians and Buddhists seek the explanation and understanding of each other's beliefs so as to deepen an intellectual understanding of their respective religions. The

second dialogue is that of spiritual experience, in which Christians and Buddhists attempt to communicate their experiences of accessing the Ultimate Reality and promoting human spirituality. The third dialogue is that of social action, in which Christians and Buddhists seek to share the ethical values of their respective religions, in which they can explore possibilities of collaboration in the common concern for the wellbeing of society.

The second half of the chapter looks to the future, and discusses prospects for Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan, based on histories lessons from past and current evidence. This will take under consideration all the material discussed in Chapters Two and Three by way of a general assessment of the factors which retard and promote Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan, and will suggest a tentative contextual model for the future. Of the three facets detailed above, this model will champion the dialogue of action as the most promising in the current circumstances of Christian-Buddhist interaction in Taiwan. It will then confirm the third hypothesis of the research: that it is in the realm of social action that the existing initiatives in Christian-Buddhist dialogue have been most productive, creating a practical and ideological base, upon which Christian-Buddhist dialogue could be constructed for the future.

### **Current Christian-Buddhist Dialogue in Taiwan**

The information in this section shows that, although there has been a steady improvement in Christian-Buddhist relationships since the 1970s, current Christian-Buddhist dialogue is rare in quantity and remains in its infant stage. This evaluation is derived not only from the overtures of the qualitative research but also from the comments of the interviewees, who had been actively involved in inter-religious dialogue.<sup>1</sup> For instance, Father Poulet-Mathis, the pioneer of inter-religious dialogue in Taiwan, said in the beginning of an interview, 'In reality, there are few inter-religious dialogues. Even PCT exhibits less interest in it.'<sup>2</sup> This section will introduce the institutions which work on inter-religious dialogue, and will describe the current condition of Christian-Buddhist dialogue from the standpoint of the dialogue of doctrine, spiritual experience, and action. In addition, it will display the

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<sup>1</sup> The interviewees that directly stated this perspective include: Albert Poulet-Mathis, Chan Takkwong, Huang Poho, and Zhou Lianhua.

<sup>2</sup> Albert Poulet-Mathis (馬天賜), interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Tien Educational Center (耕莘文教院), Taipei, 25 November 2002. The Chinese text is: '現階段台灣的宗教交談實際上不多, 連長老會的興趣也愈來愈少.'

two religions' understandings of inter-religious dialogue by way of interviewees.

### **Institutions of Inter-religious Dialogue**

In the Nationalist period, there had been some institutions, which arranged for different religious groups to come together and accomplish certain common objectives. Although not every institution was ready for inter-religious dialogue, they at least played important parts in promoting inter-religious interaction. Furthermore, both Christianity and Buddhism played primary roles in these institutions. Three of these will be introduced here.

#### **China Religious People Association**

Early in the 1950s, there had been a national religious union, 'China Religious People Association (中國宗教徒協會, CRPA),' which could be regarded as the pioneer of inter-religious interaction in Taiwan. This institution was originally founded in Nanjing (南京), China during the Second World War with the goal of rousing religious people to protect the country and to support the government.<sup>3</sup> CRPA resumed in Taiwan in 1951 CE with the executive leaders being the religious ones who were closely tied to the KMT government.<sup>4</sup> Its charter and leaders reveal that this institution was basically propagandist with the purpose being the support of the KMT government. Therefore, it is questionable as to how much this institution promoted genuine religious dialogue. The CRAP was most active at the time when late Cardinal Yu Bin (于斌) and late Archbishop Ro Guang (羅光) led this association. However, after their passing, this association fell into declination.<sup>5</sup>

#### **The Commission for Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenical Cooperation**

The Commission for Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenical Cooperation (天主教宗教交談與合作委, CIDECE) was founded by the CCT and is the only institution of

<sup>3</sup> This purpose was indicated by current president, Master Jingxin from "the Dedication of the Programme of the 'Praying for Blessing' Convention (為國祈福大會)." The original Chinese text is: '號召海內外教友奮起護國救國, 支持政府...'

<sup>4</sup> These main leaders include late Cardinal Yu Bin (于斌) of CCT, Rev. Chen Weiping (陳維屏) of MPC, Chen Shijing (陳溪圳) of PCT, and Master Baisheng (白聖) and Mr. Lee Zhikuang (李子寬) of CBA. The name list is from Master Jingxin, *the Dedication in The Programme of the 'Praying for Blessing' Convention*.

<sup>5</sup> Huang Huaichu (黃懷秋), *The Theory and Practice of Inter-religious Dialogue Catholic Church as the Example (宗教交談的理論與實踐—以天主教為例)* in *The Religious Dialogue: Theory and Practice (宗教交談: 理論與實踐)*, edit by Huang Huaichiu, Fujen Religious Series, Taipei, Taiwan: Wunan Publishing (五南出版社), 2000, 75.

inter-religious dialogue which officially sprang from a single religious group. Its establishment was encouraged by the late Pope John Paul II, when the Bishop Conferences of CCT visited him in 1990 CE. The Commission is considered to be the official starting point of CCT's ministry of inter-religious dialogue in Taiwan, but was already far behind the Catholic Church's initiatives in other Asian countries. From its inception, Poulet-Mathis was the key figure and has been the acting secretary of this commission for ten years. Interviews and written materials show that this commission comes up with three main achievements over the last decade.

The first achievement is Poulet-Mathis' diplomatic visits to many temples and religious organisations. Aforementioned in Chapter Two, his sincerity and diligence enabled him to deliver the CCT's good will and establish strong relationships with various organisations. Poulet-Mathis then set up conferences to promote inter-religious dialogue. The first three were held for Catholic clergy and focused on delivering the vision of inter-religious dialogue, and since 1994 CE, the Commission has held five more conferences focused on Christian-Buddhist dialogue with topics including family values and care for the dying. A total of about sixty Christians and Buddhists attended each conference, with the programmes of each containing lectures from the two religious views on the themes of the conference, panel discussions, joint meditation practices, and visits to temples and churches. As of 1999 CE, however, the CIDEC no longer holds the conference. The final achievement is the advocacy of individual activities towards inter-religious dialogue. For instance, the CIDEC called a press conference of 'the Respect of Life,' commonly presided over by Cardinal Shan Guoxi (單國璽) and Master Shengyen in October of 2003.

Although the CIDEC was officially a CCT institution, not all churches and priests in the CCT supported its works. Poulet-Mathis took the major responsibility, while other CCT clergy and bishops participated only passively. This apathy is further demonstrated by the low turnout at these conferences. The conference rosters list the participant number, which averaged thirty-five Christians and thirty-four Buddhists, in three of four conferences.<sup>6</sup> It is clear that the CCT's local parish did not actively encourage believers to participate in these conferences and the laity showed little interest. These conditions reveal that in reality the ministries of this commission do not have a great deal of influence in the CCT.

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<sup>6</sup> The fourth conference did not list the name of participants in the handbook.

## The Conference of Religions and Peace in Taiwan

The Conference of Religions and Peace in Taiwan (中華民國宗教與和平協進會, TCRP) was founded under the encouragement of Asian Conference of Religions and Peace (ACRP) in 1994 CE. In the beginning, the members were composed mainly from Christianity, Buddhism, and Tientism (天帝教); other religions including Islam, Daoism, Unity Sect (一貫道), and the Unification Church (統一教)... joined later. Poulet-Mathis again played a major role in this organisation and was its president for six years. Included here are some PCT leaders, who participated individually, rather than in the name of the Church. The main Buddhist contributor is Master Jingxin (淨心), the president of Chinese Buddhist Association and who is currently the president of TCRP.<sup>7</sup>

Like CIDECE, TCRP also held a Religion and Peace Conference for various religious followers to join together and share their experiences. Since 1995 CE, there have been five conferences, whose topics included the various religious concepts of life and death, and religious view on IQ (Intelligence Quotient) and EQ (Emotion Quotient).<sup>8</sup> Although these conferences open to all religions, their actual participants were no more than CIDECE's conferences. The second task of TCRP is to link religions together to present their views on certain religious issues such as school religious education and the drafting of 'the Religious Law.' TCRP's third function was to participate in international inter-religious dialogue organisations, WCRP and ACRP. The fourth is to hold the annual religious trips to visit different religious institutions so that the members of TCRP can know about the other religions.

Although this organisation attempts to promote inter-religious relationship and dialogue, a negative evaluation was given by some of the participants. Huang Poho, who was a member of this institution for years and later withdrew, spoke about the works of TCRP. He said that, 'the works of TCRP were completely dependent on Poulet-Mathis without a firm foundation. Many people joined this institution because of Poulet-Mathis rather than their sense of the importance of inter-religious dialogue.'<sup>9</sup> Poho elaborates that, 'though there were opportunities for making friendships in these

<sup>7</sup> The above information is from the introduction of the host organisation in the handbook of the fourth Religions and Peace Conference.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Huang Poho, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in President's office, Tainan Presbyterian Theological College and Seminary, 30 October 2002. The Chinese text is '它本來的目的是很好, 只是完全靠馬神父的人際關係支撐起來, 本身沒有一個紮實的基礎. 很多人參加是衝著馬神父的面子, 並不是真正認為宗教交談重要.'



activities, their bustling activities are not constructive to inter-religious dialogue.<sup>10</sup> His comment shows the limitations of the TCRP. In terms of TCRP's membership, apart from the CCT, neither Christian nor Buddhist organisations participated officially in this Conference. The PCT and Buddhist members are few and join in an unofficial capacity, and there is no MPC representation. It is evident that currently in Taiwan neither Christianity nor Buddhism pays too much attention to the TCRP, as the TCRP's works could not popularly expand its influence into Christianity and Buddhism. Nevertheless, it does at least provide an opportunity for members of various religions to meet and to make friendships.

#### Conclusion - The Limited Effect of Institutions of Inter-religious Dialogue

The study about the current institutions of inter-religious dialogue shows that these institutions facilitate a forum for religions to meet, communicate, and build friendships. They also provide opportunities for different religions to cooperate in special social movements such as emergency relief. Unfortunately, the function of these institutions in promoting inter-religious dialogue is understood to be shallow and unable to encourage a deeper level of interaction. In addition, these institutions' works rest solely on specific figures such as Yu Bin of CRPA, and Poulet-Mathis of CIDEK and TCRP. When these figures pass away or retire, their institutions dwindle in their vitality and function. This condition shows that the work of these institutions is without a firm foundation and that inter-religious dialogue has not become an issue of vital concern for the various religions in Taiwan. Last, the under representation in the activities of these institutions shows that their influence is constrained to a few religions.

It can be concluded that these institutions have only limited effects in promoting inter-religious dialogue in Taiwan. However, there are other events in Christian-Buddhist dialogue which takes place outside these institutions. The next section will describe some of these events so as to give a larger picture of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan. These dialogues will be described from the perspective of the dialogue of doctrine, spiritual experience, and social action.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid. The Chinese text is: '各宗教只是來建立關係, 很熱鬧, 但是事實上沒有做甚麼.'



## Activities of Christian-Buddhist Dialogue

### Christian-Buddhist Dialogue of Doctrine

The information drawn from interviews shows that only a few instances of this form of dialogue have happened before. Two prominent events should be noted here including The Inter-religious Dialogue Conferences of Fugen Catholic University (輔仁大學, FJCU), and the dialogue between the Modern Chan Society (MCS) and the China Lutheran Seminary (中華信義神院, CLS).

### The Conference of Inter-Religious Dialogue at FJCU

In response to the Catholic Church's initiative of promoting inter-religious dialogue, FJCU established the Department of Religious Study (DRS) in 1988 CE. One of the goals of this department is 'to promote the real inter-religious dialogue through introducing the doctrines of various religions academically.'<sup>11</sup> According to Chan Takkong, the dean of DRS, the primary route to this goal is 'to gather students and staff from various religions to share their beliefs and religious experiences, so as to form an atmosphere of inter-religious dialogue.'<sup>12</sup> Since 2000 CE, DRS expanded its influence outside of the school by holding annual conferences on inter-religious dialogue. The topic for the year 2000 CE was 'Religious Dialogue,' featuring nine essays and two conclusive discussions.<sup>13</sup> From 2001 CE on, the conference chooses a religious topic and invites different religious representatives to give their religion's perspective.

Peng Shuying (彭書穎), a postgraduate student of the DRS and a Christian of MPC, expressed that, through studying in the DRS, he sensed the importance of knowing other religions and appreciating inter-religious dialogue. His response demonstrates the work the DRS does to help students to discover the importance of inter-religious dialogue. However, as a conference participant for three years, Peng indicated that 'these conferences were actually in a state where everyone airs their own views without really listening to other religions' voices.'<sup>14</sup> Even Chan Takkong

<sup>11</sup> This goal is listed in the introduction of this department.

<sup>12</sup> Chan Takkong, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in DRS, FJCU, Xingzhuang, 25 November 2002. The Chinese text is: '讓各宗教的老師和學生來分享自己的信仰, 依循這個原則, 讓宗教交談的精神, 滲透到整個學系.'

<sup>13</sup> All the essays were compiled and published as the book, The Department of the Religious Studies ed., *Proceedings of the Conference on Religious Dialogue 2000 Department of Religious Studies Fu Jen Catholic University* (輔大宗教系 2000 年宗教交談研討會論文集), Xingzhuang, Taiwan (台灣新莊): Fu Jen University Press, 2002.

<sup>14</sup> Peng Shuying, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Campus Evangelical Fellowship, Taipei, 19 November 2002. The Chinese text is: '那種座談會, 可能只是大家講一講, 笑一笑, 各說各話, 然後就'

admitted that, at present, these conferences just provided opportunities for different religions to express their views on certain issues, but that dialogue between religions was non-existent.<sup>15</sup>

Besides, when examining the background of the conference leaders, it is doubtful that the conferences' influence spreads out within religious circles. In the conference of 2000 CE, eight of the nine people who presented their essays were scholars and six of them were the staff of FJCU. Among the thirty-three presiders and participants of conclusive discussions, only six, (four Catholic, one Buddhist, and one Daoist) were the clergy of religious institutions: the rest were all scholars.<sup>16</sup> As an academic conference, it is natural that it would be mainly scholars who led the discussion, but this fact demonstrates that these conferences were basically academic dialogues, not religious ones.

This does not mean that these conferences had no value in promoting inter-religious dialogue. On the contrary, they were at least a starting point for the dialogue of doctrine in Taiwan and provided opportunities for religious scholars to understand different beliefs. The reality is that, with the exception of the CCT, the number of religious leaders and lay people who participated in these conferences was small. This means that the dialogue of doctrine in Taiwan remains in the academic sphere.

### **The Dialogue between Modern Chan Society and China Lutheran Seminary**

The qualitative study showed that, among Christian churches in Taiwan, the MPC rarely participates in inter-religious dialogue, with the exception of the dialogue between the China Lutheran Seminary and the Modern Chan Society. With a vision of indigenising Christianity in Taiwan, the CLS's president, Yu Jibin (于繼斌), established a religious research centre in 1995 CE<sup>17</sup> which seeks to study and engage in dialogue with traditional Chinese religions and new religions movements.

The MCS is a modern Chan Buddhist group and founded by a legendary lay

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走了,這種影響真的很少.'

<sup>15</sup> Chan Takkong, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in DRS, FJCU, Xingzhuang, 25 November 2002.

<sup>16</sup> The statistic is according to the Department of the Religious Studies ed., *Proceedings of the Conference on Religious Dialogue 2000 Department of Religious Studies Fu Jen Catholic University* (輔大宗教系 2000 年宗教交談研討會論文集), Xingzhuang, Taiwan (台灣新莊): Fu Jen University Press, 2002, 369-370.

<sup>17</sup> Its full name is The Research Center for Traditional Chinese Religious and New Religious Movements (傳統信仰與新興宗教研究中心).

Buddhist master, Li Yuansong. In an interview, Li Yuansong indicated three specific characteristics of the MCS. Firstly, Li said, 'Modern Chan considers Western modern cultures such as democracy, humanity, and reason, to be valuable in the practices of individuals and the operation of the group.'<sup>18</sup> Secondly, Li notes that it adheres to Buddha's teachings that, 'all living beings are equal,' and he therefore rejected 'traditional Buddhist concept that monks are superior to lay people and that the male is superior to the female.'<sup>19</sup> Thirdly, the MCS rejected 'the traditional Buddhist concept that one must eliminate human desire in order to attain Nirvāṇa,' and affirmed that 'sincerely facing human desire and properly acquiring its satisfaction are healthy and correspondent with the original concept of Buddha.'<sup>20</sup> These three features display the MCS's genuine attempt to modernise Buddhist beliefs, but these features at the same time arouse the criticism from Buddhist groups in Taiwan.

The dialogue of the two institutes spanned from May 2000 to July 2002 CE including electronic, letters, and three direct meetings. All of the dialogue correspondence was saved by the two institutions and eventually published.<sup>21</sup> This dialogue ceased in 2002 CE when the CLS two researchers resigned. Although both sides have announced the resumption of dialogues in 2003 CE, a follow up was unable to be held because of the death of Li Yuansong in December 2003.

In interviews with the dialogue participants, both sides felt that the dialogues had been a good experience. Li said, 'when I had met Yu, I felt like meeting my old friend...Through this dialogue, I made many good friends, and I held the perspective that we were sincere and appreciated each other.'<sup>22</sup> Yu elaborated, saying, 'I believe that this dialogue went beyond expectations. We mutually built deep relationships and trusts so that we could have such sincere dialogue. There was not one who could convince the other, but both considered that sincere sharing was the most precious

<sup>18</sup> Li Yuansong, interviewed by Jutta Pan, in Modern Chan Society, Taipei, 18 December 2002. The Chinese text is: '現代歐美文化的特質是理性的人道的, 和民主的...現代禪認為這些涵養是有助於一個人明心見性, 悟道解脫的...'

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. The Chinese text is: '現代禪對傳統禪的第二點的反抗是, 不認同過去男尊女卑, 僧尊俗卑的觀念, 這個固然違背了潮流, 也違背了佛陀眾生平等的觀念.'

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. The Chinese text is: '現代禪對人的慾望採取一種正面肯定的態度...認為如果真實的面對, 適度的滿足, 是比較健康的, 我認為是符合佛陀本懷的.'

<sup>21</sup> The name of this book is *A Contact between Buddhism and Christianity--Dialogues between Modern Chan Society and China Lutheran Seminary* (佛教與基督教信仰的交會—現代禪和中華信義神學院的對話).

<sup>22</sup> Li Yuansong, interviewed by Jutta Pan, in Modern Chan Society, Taipei, 18 December 2002. The Chinese text is: '我和于院長見面後, 這種(親切)的感覺更加強了, 好像遇故知那樣親...就真誠來說, 和他們交談的收穫是認識了很多真正的好朋友, 如果對內容而言, 我的觀感是真誠和惺惺相惜的.'

experience.<sup>23</sup>

Both sides found this dialogue quite successful. One reason for which was that both sides had a sincere attitude coming into the dialogue. They were willing to consider each understand the other's beliefs and were honest in appreciating the differences between them. As Li said, 'We were not afraid to express and to compare our differences from each other. We were not even afraid to confront our differences, for we believed that we should not conceal our real state and this was an expression of sincere respect for the other.'<sup>24</sup> This sincerity was displayed in their forthcoming convictions and intention to evangelise the other. In one of their meetings, one CLS researcher, Zheng Lijing (鄭麗津), expressed several times that she sincerely hoped that Li would lead all the members of MCS to become Christians someday.<sup>25</sup> Even though they had different views on the doctrines, the participants showed great respect for these discrepancies during conversation.

However, both sides agreed that they had yet to delve into a deep threshold of dialogue. Li said, 'If there was any flaw (of our dialogue), it was that our dialogues were not deep enough.'<sup>26</sup> Yu expressed, 'I consider it only an interaction of faiths and hearts rather than the dialogue of doctrine.'<sup>27</sup> The reason for these comments was that neither side had a sufficient knowledge of the other's faith. Both Yu and Li admitted that they did not know each other's beliefs well enough.<sup>28</sup> The contents of the published dialogue support these statements and show that they remained at the level of clarification of each other's beliefs, with only a few expository discussions of each other's correspondence or differences.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Yu Jibin, interviewed by Jutta Pan, in China Lutheran Seminary, Hsinzhu, 13 November 2002. The Chinese text is: '我是覺得我們有這樣的對話是意想不到的, 有很深的友誼和互信, 才能做到這種劈肝瀝膽的對話, 不在於說誰要說服誰, 而是在於雙方能夠分享, 彼此覺得是最珍貴, 真實的體驗.'

<sup>24</sup> Li Yuansong, interviewed by Jutta Pan, in Modern Chan Society, Taipei, 18 December 2002. The Chinese text is: '大家不要害怕, 將自己的底牌拿出來比較, 這種比較是客觀的, 甚至是碰撞性的, 我們不要怕因此友誼會受到傷害, 在民主社會不應該這樣, 因為待人以誠, 我覺得才是對人的基本尊敬.'

<sup>25</sup> Modern Chan Doctrinal Study Department ed., *A Contact between Buddhism and Christianity: Dialogue between Modern Chan Society and China Lutheran Seminary*. Taipei, Taiwan: Modern Chan Press, 2002, 43, 46, 136, 179.

<sup>26</sup> Li Yuansong, interviewed by Jutta Pan, in Modern Chan Society, Taipei, 18 December 2002. The Chinese text is: '如果有任何缺憾的話, 我認為還可以再深入一點.'

<sup>27</sup> Yu Jibin, interviewed by Jutta Pan, in China Lutheran Seminary, Hsinzhu, 13 November 2002. The Chinese text is: '我把這幾次對話界定在信仰和心靈的交流, 而不是學術上的對話.'

<sup>28</sup> Li Yuansong, interviewed by Jutta Pan, in Modern Chan Society, Taipei, 18 December 2002. Yu Jibin, interviewed by Jutta Pan in China Lutheran Seminary, Hsinzhu, 13 November 2002.

<sup>29</sup> See Modern Chan Doctrinal Study Department ed. (現代禪教研部主編), *A Contact between Buddhism and Christianity: Dialogue between Modern Chan Society and China Lutheran Seminary*,

Other groups from both religions gave little value to this dialogue. In an interview, Yu Jibin said that, at the beginning, Poulet-Mathis expressed his concern with the veracity of this dialogue, because one of the CLS' participants, Zheng Lijing had once been a nun and the dean of a Buddhist College for many years, but had since converted to Christianity. He feared that her conversion would arouse the anger of Buddhists. Likewise, Li expressed that, on the eve of publishing *A Contact between Buddhism and Christianity*, Poulet-Mathis and Chaohui expressed their concern that the publication of this book would harm relations between Buddhism and Christianity, as in the prologue of this publication, Li expressed that some Buddhists did not condone Li's appreciation for Christians and Christian doctrines, and hence labeled the MCS as 'a Buddhist heresy with a Christian essence (附佛的基督外道).<sup>30</sup> From the Christian side, my interviews show that the churches paid little attention to this dialogue. In interviewing Christian leaders, I asked at least sixteen interviewees whether they knew of the publication of this dialogue, and only two replied that they did and their statements made it clear that they did not care for this dialogue, despite the dialogue's easy accessibility, both in publication and on the internet. These responses from the two religions show that it cannot be regarded as a typical example of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan.

### **The Dialogue of Doctrine - A Conversation Rarely Happening**

The qualitative research shows that the Christian-Buddhist dialogue of doctrine happens rarely in Taiwan. The above two events display limited achievements of attempts thus far. The dialogue of FJCU conferences remains within academic field and has not influenced the religious spheres. The dialogue between CLS and MCS was a special case, and was widely criticised or ignored by the two religions. It can be concluded that the current Christian-Buddhist dialogue of doctrine has still not had a popular reception in Taiwan. However, the above two cases must still be held as groundbreaking efforts in the dialogue of doctrine in Taiwan.

### **Christian-Buddhist Dialogue of Spiritual Experience**

The Christian-Buddhist dialogue of spiritual experience in Taiwan is shown to have happened mainly between the CCT and Chan Buddhism, and it is CCT's priests who seek instruction in meditation from Buddhist masters. Chapter Two mentioned

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Taipei, Taiwan: Modern Chan Press (台灣台北: 現代禪出版社), 2002.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 4.



that since the 1970s, Poulet-Mathis had visited different Buddhist monks to learn meditation from them. Perhaps, the most prominent event in the dialogue of spiritual experience was promoted by Sheng Kung Missionary Sisters in Tainan (SKMS, 台南聖功修女會). Seeking to develop indigenous Chinese spiritual practices, SKMS worked in 1978 CE to inculturate the sphere of spiritual practice so as to develop Christian Chinese meditative experiences. They held a series of seminars on meditative practices, in which they invited Buddhist Chan masters to introduce Chan's meditation. Some of the Catholic nuns also attended Chan meditation conferences. Some results of these dialogues were put in two books, 'Some Rough Views on Chinese Meditation (中國靈修芻議)' and 'Gathering of Streams (吉光片羽)'.<sup>31</sup> In the 1990s, the CCT started to pay attention to these works and viewed them as a useful tool in the task of the CCT's inculturation.

However, this interaction appears to be one-sided, with CCT learning from Buddhism without reciprocity. Buddhists expressed a welcoming attitude towards the Catholic clergy's participation and did not reject dialogue in meditation.<sup>32</sup> However, the research is unable to document any Buddhists' participation in Catholic meditative practices. The sole joint meditative practices happened during the conferences held by CIDEDEC. However, these are but joint practices. Some Catholic participants such as Bishop Zheng Zhaifa (鄭再發) and Ho Huiqun might consider the practice to be a good experience,<sup>33</sup> but Lu Huisheng says, 'these joint meditations were just outward appearance... Many Buddhist participants did not find any significance or help to them. They would not consider that they could learn from CCT's meditation.'<sup>34</sup> Between the lines of this statement, lurks a belief in Buddhist superiority, in which the Buddhists are reluctant to believe they have anything to gain from the Catholic tradition of meditation.

To date, there is no dialogue of spiritual experience between the Protestant Church and Buddhism, primarily because the Protestant Church in Taiwan has no

<sup>31</sup> These two books are Father Chan Chunshen, *Some Rough Views on Chinese Meditation*, Taipei Taiwan: Guangchi Publishing (台灣台北: 光啓出版社), 2002; Rev. Thomas G. Han (伴渡) and Sr. Chwen Juan A. Lee (李純娟), *Gathering of Stream: A New Path to Spiritual Life (吉光片羽)*, Taipei Taiwan: Guangchi Publishing, 1992.

<sup>32</sup> In Buddhist interviewees, Master Huiyang and Professor Li Chifu expressed this perspective.

<sup>33</sup> Zheng Zhaifa, *Reflection in The Handbook of Buddhist and Christian Family Care Study Camp*, 1994, 59. Ho's opinion was expressed in the interview. Ho Huiqun, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in CIDEDEC, 18 December 2002.

<sup>34</sup> Lu Huisheng, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in a café in Taipei, 2 December 2002. The Chinese text is: '我覺得那是形式重於實質, 這些佛教徒不會覺得對他們有何意義...他們也不會去想到天主教在靈修上有甚麼可以供我們參考的.'



tradition of spiritual meditation like that of the CCT, and thus, there was no common parallel with Buddhist meditation. Exacerbating this, some Protestants' perceive Buddhist meditation as an access to evil spirits, thereby the preventing any meaningful dialogue of spiritual experience.

#### Christian-Buddhist Dialogue of Social Action

Comparatively, the dialogue of social action has found greater popularity among the two religions. There were two major events that propelled a Christian-Buddhist dialogue of action. The first is the religious cooperation in the emergency release of the earthquake that struck Taiwan on 21 September 1999, called 9/21 disaster. The other event was the cooperation between Master Chaohui and Rev. Lu Junyi (盧俊義) in establishing a ministry, that sought the dignity of life.

#### **The Cooperation of Religions in the Rescue Actions of 'the 921 Disaster'**

In 1999 CE, there was an earthquake, registering 7.3 degree on the Richter scale that struck thousands of people died beneath the rubble. Millions lost their homes and were forced to live in tents for several months. In addition to government rescue workers, many religious groups participated in rescue activities and the reconstruction of disaster areas. Among these religious groups, various Buddhist and Christian groups played important roles. During the rescue work, great cooperation was exhibited between the two religious groups. Firstly, there was mutual assistance between the Puli (埔里) Christian Hospital and Tzuchi Buddhist Hospital. Secondly, there was excellent coordination in the distribution of aid materials. Thirdly, religious leaders quickly convened several conferences to administrate different religions and coordinated different religious groups' emergency relief works. Fourthly, five religions commonly advertised charity appeals in the media for public aid in the continuation of relief work. Fifthly, different religious groups were willing to share their resources with other groups: Zhanghua (彰化) Christian Hospital provided training classes in 'victim mental reconstruction' for Buddhist monks and nuns. It is clear that religions are quick to set aside their differences in the face of disaster to cooperate in the greater healing and recovery. These cooperative events illustrated how Christians and Buddhists temporarily set aside their discrepancies and cooperated in the greater healing and recovery. This example therefore serves to suggest that inter-religious dialogue needs to grow out of a common concern for social wellbeing.

### Caring for the Dignity of Life

The participants in this dialogue of social action were but individuals from the two religions, whose influences spread throughout their communities. The principle characters of this dialogue are Chaohui, the dean of Hongshi Buddhist College (弘誓佛學院), and Lu Junyi, a PCT pastor. They cooperated in maintaining social justice and in protecting the dignity of life. Considering herself the protégé of Master Yinshun, Chaohui stated in her interview that, in fulfilling Yinshun's notion of 'establishing the Pure Land in this world,' she focused on eliminating the structural evils of society. She said, 'it is not enough only to deal with the problem of suffering. We also need to solve the problem of evil because it is the evil that produces the suffering. Therefore, if we want to eliminate the suffering, we have to cut off this source of the suffering.'<sup>35</sup> She pays special attention to inequality and inhumanity in the community, whether inside or outside Buddhism.

Lu has been a PCT pastor for more than thirty years. Not only does he hold a high pastoral reputation, but he is also esteemed in his work in protecting human rights and dignity. The common conscience of these two people brought them together from different religious backgrounds to solve the problems of human welfare through positive social action.

Their cooperation began with the common condemnation of Chicken Hunting in the lunar New Year, an activity held in 1988 CE by a temple of folk belief. This joint action not only forced this temple to apologise for its cruelty, but spread their further cooperation in safe-guarding the dignity of lives. They worked together to promote the humane care for stray dogs, the anti-abortion movement, and recently to oppose the government's legalization of gambling. Their cooperative social action encouraged other interactions: both were invited to visit the other's organisation to give speeches introducing their own religious views on issues of human dignity and after life.

These dialogues did not mean that their beliefs were in perfect agreement. But Lu said, 'inter-religious dialogue should not start from the doctrinal differences but from the two religions' common concern, which is the dignity of life.'<sup>36</sup> Working together did not mean that these differences are more easily dealt with, rather the differences

<sup>35</sup> Chaohui (昭慧), interviewed by Jutta Pan, in Hongshi Buddhist College (弘誓佛學院), Kuanyin (觀音), 23 December 2002. The Chinese text is: '建立人間佛教光面對苦難, 不面對罪惡是不行的, 因為它確實存在, 而且產生苦難, 所以必需在上遊切斷苦難的源頭, 如此便需面對罪惡.'

<sup>36</sup> Lu Junyi (盧俊義), interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Dongmeng Presbyterian Church (東門長老教會), Taipei, 7 January 2003. The Chinese text is: '基本上不要開始於教義上的差異, 而是要去找一個共同點, 這個共同點就是生命的尊嚴.'

are put aside so as not to hinder their cooperation. Though only a few people participated in these dialogues, their actions yielded positive results.

### **The Dialogue of Social Action - A Promising Inter-religious Dialogue**

Besides the two above events, the qualitative research also found other examples of the dialogues of social action between Christianity and Buddhism. The volunteers of Tzuchi regularly visited some Catholic charities to help their work. According to one of the volunteers, Mrs. Yang, during the visitations, the staff from both religions cooperated well and were respectful of each other's faiths.<sup>37</sup> Chapter Two mentioned the experiences of a Buddhist interviewee who cooperated with Christians in their caring for terminal hospital patients. Another interviewee, Xu Sufen (許素芬), mentioned that the Mackay Memorial Christian Hospital (馬偕紀念醫院) to which her husband as a doctor, had invited Buddhist monks to join in the care for the dying. Further, the conferences held by TCRP and CIDEDEC focused on the religious perspectives on human life. All these events show that the dialogue of social action is easily accepted by Christians and Buddhists. For the people of these two religions, the common concern for people's welfare enables them to cross over the boundaries of ideological issues.

### **The Assessment of Activities of Christian-Buddhist Dialogue in Taiwan**

In terms of the dialogue of doctrine, in only two cases has it actually happened. The conferences held by the FJCU were mainly academic affairs and were not Church sanctioned. The dialogue between the MCS and the CLS was a special case and ceased when the context had changed. A real interaction of doctrine has yet to happen on a popular level. However, these two events can at least act at a launching point for the dialogue of doctrine. The dialogue of spiritual experience only includes the CCT's one-sided learning meditative practices from Chan Buddhists in the hopes of developing indigenous meditation. The joint meditation and rites which happened in the conferences held by the CIDEDEC gave mixed results between the two religions. The dialogues of social action happened more often than the other two dialogues with several actually involving practical actions, and others were ask to share religious experiences and their views on practical issues. Their common concerns are about the dignity of life, or cooperation in caring for human and social problems. Although the quantity of such events are few, the quality of working together in joint social action

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<sup>37</sup> Mrs. Yang, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Zhuchi Taipei Branch, 28 November 2002.

left participants with good experiences and promises an expansion for Christian-Buddhist dialogue in the future.

### **Christian Views of Inter-religious Dialogue**

The presentation of Christian views on inter-religious dialogue will paint a picture of the present state of affairs. The research of this information follows the same qualitative model of interview employed. This section will focus on the four main Taiwanese churches.

#### **Catholic Church in Taiwan**

##### **Leadership Level**

Chapter Two documented the friendly attitude of the CCT's leaders to other religions in general and to Buddhism specifically. After the establishment of the CIDEDEC, inter-religious dialogue became an official ministry. Cardinal Shan Guoxi and the current president of the CIDEDEC, Bishop Zheng Zaifa, both show their support for the CIDEDEC's works by participating in inter-religious dialogue. However, this participation does not entail the dialogue's popular acceptance by the CCT. This condition is revealed by the fact that over the past ten years, Poulet-Mathis seems to be the only one who took on the responsibility for the ministries of the CIDEDEC. When I visited the CIDEDEC office and asked Miss Ho Huiqun, the administrative secretary, about the ministries, all her responses were about the ministries of Poulet-Mathis and the works before 1999 CE. This suggests that after Poulet-Mathis's retirement, the works of the CIDEDEC waned, combined with the closure of the main ministry of CIDEDEC, the Christian-Buddhist dialogue conferences in 1999 CE. This evidence suggests that, although an official ministry of the inter-religious dialogue in the past ten years, the CCT's works were deeply dependent on Poulet-Mathis, and lacked activity from the leadership levels of the CCT.

##### **The Academic Field**

Among the CCT's academic field, the Department of Religious Studies at the FJCU plays the greatest role in promoting inter-religious dialogue. Chapter Two gave argument that the theologians in the DRS are of the conviction that all religions lead to the same destiny. This view leaves the CCT's religious with an open mind towards other religions and a welcoming view towards inter-religious dialogue. As a result, they have stepped into a leading role in promoting Christian-Buddhist dialogue. Their

main ministry, as mentioned, is to holding an annual conference on inter-religious dialogue. However, the question is how much do current works influence the local churches? The evidence suggests that the influence is but minimal.

### **The Local Churches**

As indicated in Chapter Two, the interviews from the local churches of the CCT consist of two priest and some lay people with information also gathered from local churches' responses to the CCT's activities of inter-religious dialogue. Expressing their confirmation of other religions, the two priests I interviewed both agree that they welcome Christian-Buddhist dialogue, considering it an opportunity for Christians to learn from other religions. However, they admitted that they themselves did not participate in any of the recent activities meaning that although they had a welcoming attitude towards a Christian-Buddhist dialogue, they failed to act on it. Both priests insisted that Christians could not compromise the belief in the uniqueness of their faiths for the sake of inter-religious dialogue. As Father Shen said in an interview, 'We must not give up our own standpoint for the sake of inter-religious dialogue or maintaining the relationship...I want to reiterate the monotheism and the uniqueness of soteriology.'<sup>38</sup>

According to Ho Huiqun, the views of other priests on inter-religious dialogue are widely divergent. In an interview, she said:

When other religions asked Father Poulet-Mathis to invite other Bishops and Fathers to participated in their activities, Some priests expressed their supports for these activities, but there were also some expressing that these religions were superstitions or that there were evil spirits within them.<sup>39</sup>

These responses show that, though the official ministry of the CCT, inter-religious dialogue lacks the support of local church priests.

Lay people, who are in low numbers of the Christian participants in the CIDECE's

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<sup>38</sup> Shen Rongbing, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in The Cathedral of the Saviour, Kaohsiung, 12 December 2002. The Chinese text is: '不能爲了宗教交談或關係, 放棄自己的立場, 我認爲該堅持執著的, 不能放棄...我要重申的是一神論和救恩論.'

<sup>39</sup> Ho Huiqun, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Commission of Inter-religious Dialogue and Ecumenical Cooperation, Taipei, 18 December 2002. The Chinese text is: '如別的宗教有活動, 請馬神父邀請我們的神父教友參加, 有的主教神父就很支持, 有的神父乾脆跟馬神父說, 這些宗教都是迷信, 還有的神父怕和他們交往, 會有邪靈的作用, 因爲他們只相信獨一的真神.'

conferences of Christian-Buddhist dialogue<sup>40</sup> show that inter-religious dialogue still hasn't been paid the proper attention. Besides, Ho Huiqun said:

When Father Poulet-Mathis was the acting secretary of CIDEDEC, some CCT Christians complained that he was too nice to people from other religions but ignored the needs of Christians...They also disliked Father Poulet-Mathis cooperated with PCT because of the differences of political perspective.<sup>41</sup>

The CCT's local churches are more conservative in their views on inter-religious dialogue than their leading clergy and academicians.

### **Conclusion**

Compared with some Third World Catholic Churches, the ministry of inter-religious dialogue started much later in Taiwan and was enforced by the late Pope in 1990 CE. Thus, it is hard to see whether inter-religious dialogue was popularly accepted by the churches and adherents of the CCT. Although there is lip-service paid to welcoming inter-religious dialogue into the different levels of the CCT, this courteous expression does not result in any practical application. There are huge gaps between the statements and actions. In general, the mandate of the CCT's promotion of inter-religious dialogue comes from its upper level, starting with the Bishop Conference. But since the local churches have not yet paid attention to the dialogue, it still needs time to nourish to the grass roots. Although current inter-religious dialogue is unpopular, Chan Takkwong expressed his optimistic view towards its future in the CCT, saying 'In general, the development of the Catholic Church's ministry of inter-religious dialogue is from the upper level downward. This development therefore will not turn back... The theoretical foundation has been established only it has not been rooted in the grass roots level.'<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, it is hard to say how long it will

<sup>40</sup> According to the numbers listed in the handbooks of two conferences, which are obtained from CIDEDEC, the Catholic attendance of the conference is 24 in 1994, 46 in 1995, and 36 in 1996.

<sup>41</sup> Ho Huiqun, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Commission of Inter-religious Dialogue and Ecumenical Cooperation, Taipei, 18 December 2002. The Chinese text is: '有時候有些教友會對於馬神父有些意見, 想怎麼搞的, 對佛教那麼客氣, 反而不高興, 怕會冷落了我們。基督教如長老會的政治活動, 如在中正紀堂的那一次, 而馬神父也不是很了解, 就出席, 有些教友就想馬神父怎麼會去支持台獨?'

<sup>42</sup> Chan Takkong, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Chan's office, Hsingzhuang (新莊), 25 November 2002. The Chinese text is '總而言之, 天主教從上而下是開放的...那百姓們只是沒有帶動起來, 它絕對不會回頭, 而且有神學基礎, 只是說還沒有往下紮根.'



take for the vision and ministry to achieve popularity. And the CCT has depended heavily on Poulet-Mathis, and the whole Church has not really given inter-religious dialogue its due attention. His retirement makes it difficult to evaluate the future potential prospects of inter-religious dialogue in the CCT in the future.

## The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

### **Academic Field**

Unlike the Catholic Church, which has a fairly uniform view on inter-religious dialogue, the PCT's views are quite diverse among the churches. This diversity is firstly shown in the academic field. Chapter Two made mention of the two typical views of the PCT's theologians towards other religions, which go on to forge the diversity of the inter-religious dialogue perspectives. The perspective that all religions stand equally in leading people to ultimate destiny, leads Huang Poho to actively participate in inter-religious dialogue both at international conferences and domestic activities. Zheng Yangen, although having participated in international inter-religious dialogue conferences and vocalising his open welcome for dialogue with other Taiwanese religions, also mentioned that he has no personal experiences of dialogue with Buddhism or other institutional religions. It is also worth noting that, though Huang did actively participate in dialogue, he later withdrew because of certain political objections. The other reason for his withdrawal was his disappointment in the gatherings, as they only focused on making superficial friendships without follow-up actions towards greater dialogue.<sup>43</sup> All this told that, despite the scholars' open views towards other religions, there are other outside factors that can impede inter-religious dialogue.

### **Local Churches' Pastors**

The evidences gathered from qualitative research testified that, though local church pastors held divergent views on other religions, each expressed that they welcome Christian-Buddhism dialogue, but their words were the entirety of their interaction, as none but Lu Jungyi, participated in Christian-Buddhist dialogue. Under the three forms of inter-religious dialogue, all the pastors asserted that the most feasible form of inter-religious dialogue is that of social action. For the pastors who claim the uniqueness of Jesus' salvation and the differences between the two religions,

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<sup>43</sup> Huang Poho, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in President's office, Tainan Presbyterian Theological College and Seminary, 30 October 2002.

the dialogue of social action is one that most readily exists without compromising Christian belief. Even those pastors who accept the possibility of salvation by other religions still maintain that the disparity of beliefs between Christianity and Buddhism makes the dialogue of social action the only one in which to start their dialogue.

### **Lay People**

Two lay interviewees, Chen Zhaonan and Xu Sufen, held a reserved view on inter-religious dialogue. They were suspicious of the dialogue of doctrine and spiritual experience, claiming that these dialogues are useless in evangelisation. They provisionally accepted the dialogue of social action because of its value in contributing to human wellbeing, but asserted that the dialogue proceed without compromising the Christian faith. In addition, Huang Poho indicated that lay people, still under the influence of traditional Western theological tradition, tend to be the most conservative group in their views on inter-religious dialogue.<sup>44</sup> This perspective was also shared by Chang Lifu. Although the above interviewees do not necessarily represent all lay believers, when considered alongside the two pastor's comments, it can be affirmed that lay people in the PCT hold a very reserved view on inter-religious dialogue.

### **The General Assembly**

The local churches' views on inter-religious dialogue result in making the General Assembly maintain a cautious attitude to inter-religious dialogue. The General Secretary Lo Jonkuang asserted that the PCT could only accept inter-religious dialogue conditionally. In the interview, he listed two problems when the PCT dialogue with Buddhism. He first admitted that the Church's current tendency towards exclusivism was a barrier to Christian-Buddhist dialogue, which caused the Church much difficulty in accepting doctrinal dialogue between the two religions. Second, he indicated that different political standpoint between the PCT and other religions creates another barrier towards Christian-Buddhist dialogue. In the interview, he said:

PCT clearly identifies the Church with Taiwan and holds the political conviction that Taiwan should seek its independence from China. However, other religions and Christian churches obviously support the KMT and identify themselves with China.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Huang Poho, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in President's office, Tainan Presbyterian Theological College and Seminary, 30 October 2002.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. The Chinese text is: '天主教和佛教的領導人是外省人, 他們是支持國民黨和認同中國, 長

Therefore, he believed it inappropriate for the PCT to become officially involved in Christian-Buddhist dialogue at this time. He indicated that the PCT members should participate in the dialogue individually. He also confirmed accessibility of dialogue with Buddhism in social activities, but as for the dialogues of doctrine and spiritual experience, he maintained the difficulties owing to the Church's claim to unique salvation through Jesus Christ. His interview shows that, officially, the PCT does not consider inter-religious dialogue to be their primary ministry.

### **Conclusion**

There is a discrepancy of views on inter-religious dialogue in the PCT. The academic field holds the most open mind with respect to the possibility of the dialogue, while local churches are suspicious of it, preferring that its individual members be the ones who engaged in it. Of the three forms of dialogue, only that of social action is accepted. Although there are opinions that affirm the necessity of inter-religious dialogue within the PCT, in actuality, it is a rare event. Despite academic openness, theologians in the PCT do not take many steps towards Christian-Buddhist dialogue. Inter-religious dialogue remains unaccepted by the PCT.

### **Mandarin Protestant Church**

Interviewees of the MPC hold a suspicious view on inter-religious dialogue. Seven of the fifteen subjects said that there should be no connection between Christianity and other religions, for there is no connection between the light - Christianity, and the darkness - non-Christian religions. Therefore, Christians should not have any relation with followers of other beliefs. Seven of fifteen interviewees said that evangelisation is always the churches' primary ministry. Let a few people participate in inter-religious dialogue, but most Christians should focus on evangelisation. There was also one pastor, Lin Mingyi, who expressed that churches can only allow pastors and mature Christians to participate in inter-religious dialogue so as to avoid the faith of inexperienced Christians being shaken because of their participation in inter-religious dialogue.

But, there were some positive views on inter-religious dialogue. Two interviewees, Yu Jibin of CLS and Lin Fangzi of Youth Evangelical Association (青年歸主協會林芳治) viewed dialogue as an opportunity for Christians to share the

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老會是認同本土, 支持台灣獨立, 這個政治意識的不同, 會造成對話的困難.'

gospel with other religious people without forcing them to accept it.<sup>46</sup> Pong Kwanhua (龐君華), a pastor of the Methodist Church, viewed dialogue as a way of understanding the hardships of other people through learning how other faiths provide comfort and guidance to fit the needs of people.<sup>47</sup> Interviewees holding these views support the dialogue of doctrine with the motivation of evangelisation. Three interviewees held that Christians have a responsibility to cooperate with people of other religions in promoting social welfare. Interviewees holding this view naturally supported the dialogue of social action. Though there were supporters of the possibility of inter-religious dialogue, they both agreed that it is hard to harmonise the discrepancy of doctrines between Christianity and Buddhism. Although these latter interviewees held positive views on Christian-Buddhist dialogue, there was almost no participation in Christian-Buddhist dialogue with the exception of Yu Jibin.

The research reveals that a dialogue, whether of doctrine, spiritual experience, or social action, is difficult to initiate in the MPC. In practice, there is no record of any dialogue between the MPC and Buddhism, except the dialogue between the CLS and the MCS. It is difficult to assess the prospect of future dialogue as well.

#### Pentecostal Churches

Chapter Two presented the Pentecostal churches' open hostility towards other religions. This attitude also reveals in the fact that Pentecostal Christians wholly refused Christian-Buddhist dialogue. In interviews, three interviewees considered the dialogues of doctrine and spiritual experience a single purpose, evangelisation through the confrontation of evil spirits. Only those who are filled with the Holy Spirit and who receive special inspiration from God, are allowed to participate in such dialogue. This kind of Christian-Buddhist interaction is not a dialogue but rather a confrontation. Furthermore, they maintained that there is no possibility of the dialogue of social action for it is impossible to cooperate with other religions because evil spirits are within these religions. They are of the mind that churches had better stay away from other religions when performing acts of charity.

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<sup>46</sup> Yu Jibin (俞繼斌), interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in China Lutheran Seminary (中華信義神學院), Hsinzhu (新竹), 13 November 2002. Lin Fangzhi (林芳治), interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Youth Evangelical Association (青年歸主協會), Taipei, 20 November 2002.

<sup>47</sup> Pong Kwanhua (龐君華), interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Centre-City Methodist Church (衛理公會城中教會), Taipei, 7 January 2003.

### Conclusion: Inter-religious Dialogue--An Unknown Future?

The findings in the qualitative research inquiring into the various Christian traditions' views on inter-religious dialogue reveal that Christians in Taiwan show little interest in dialogue with Buddhism or other religions. This condition is especially evident in the gap between interviewees' oral affirmation and their ignorance of practical involvement. For the CCT, although there is an official commission of inter-religious dialogue in the upper level of the Church, and the local churches' expression of open acceptance of inter-religious dialogue, grass roots' actions in the dialogue are rare. For the PCT, although contextual theology has challenged the Church's theological tradition, like the CCT, the dialogue events are fragmentary in the local churches and the leading level is hesitant to start an official inter-religious dialogue. For the MPC, theological concepts of the uniqueness of Christianity and the priority of evangelisation cause the Church to ignore the necessity of dialogue. The rapid growth of the Pentecostal movement, which holds the most suspicious attitude towards inter-religious dialogue, has become an obvious barrier to it. These responses verify the comments of Chan Takkong in an interview about the future possibility of inter-religious dialogue in Taiwan. He said, 'inter-religious dialogue in Taiwan remains an unknown future.'<sup>48</sup>

An obvious diagnosis as to why the Church ignores inter-religious dialogue is the three Christian traditions' common conservative theological tendency, which begs question of whether churches in Taiwan will easily change their theological standpoint in the future. A more fundamental question is if is, is it even possible for churches to give up the confession of the uniqueness of Christianity? Answers to these questions await further consideration in the second half of this chapter. At the same time, the example of PCT's theologians shows that merely accepting the concept of pluralism does not necessary cause people to actively participate in inter-religious dialogue. Therefore, theological standpoint is not necessarily the deciding factor in dialogue participation.

On the upside, it cannot be concluded that there is no future for inter-religious dialogue in Taiwan. At least, to a certain degree, inter-religious dialogue is not completely rejected by most of the interviewees anymore. This means that Taiwanese Churches are more open to inter-religious dialogue than in the past. But still, there is no compelling motivation for the Church in Taiwan to participate in inter-religious

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<sup>48</sup> Chan Takkong, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Chan's office, Hsingzhuang (新莊), 25 November 2002. The Chinese text is '你認為宗教交談的未來在台灣的可能性? 未來還不知道.'

dialogue.

## **Buddhist Views of Inter-religious Dialogue**

### **Traditional Buddhism**

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the most valuable data obtained was from the interviews of Buddhist leaders. It should be mentioned that the current president of CBA, Master Jingxin, is currently also president of TCRP. It would seem obvious that since the head of the leading institution of traditional Buddhism in Taiwan actively participated in the inter-religious dialogue, traditional Buddhism would hold a positive attitude to inter-religious dialogue. However, the qualitative research reveals the contrary as traditional Buddhists do not show much interest in inter-religious dialogue.

Traditional Buddhist interviewees indicated passive and conservative responses to inter-religious dialogue. One Buddhist master<sup>49</sup> considered the dialogues of doctrine and spiritual experience to be valueless to Buddhists. He expressed that he had already know Christian beliefs and did not want to waste his time, preferring to use his energy in enhancing his own ministry. He believed that if he engaged in dialogue with Christians, he would arouse the suspicion of other temple leaders and the higher administration of traditional Buddhism.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, while in agreement about the possibilities for the dialogue of social action, he thought better to let the leading level take initiative. A receptionist nun in a big temple also expressed a similar opinion. Approaching this temple to seek an appointment with the temple's representative, this receptionist nun refused my request, saying that this interview would be a waste of their time.

Two other clerical interviewees gave milder responses, saying that they would not reject an opportunity for inter-religious dialogue, but this did not mean that they are willing to actively participate in the dialogue. In reality, they didn't engage in dialogue with Christians or other religious people. Huiyang, although a professor in the Department of Religious Studies in a College with Christian colleagues in the same department, admitted that she did not have interaction with them, especially on the dialogue of beliefs. Another interviewee, Ruchi (如濟), though claiming the

<sup>49</sup> This master asked me not to tape his views and nor did he want his name be mentioned.

<sup>50</sup> Since this interview was not taped, the following Chinese transcription of the conversation is not the completely accurate. However, it faithfully expressed the views from this master. The Chinese texts are '在教義上和靈性經驗上, 我認為是不可能溝通的, 只會各講各的, 或是發生衝突, 何必浪費時間, 許多出家人都有作不完的工作, 何必浪費時間在這上面, and '我們佛教是有組織的, 如果我們做了這些事, 如果上面來問我說, 你們爲甚麼正事不做, 做這些幹甚麼? 那我怎麼說?'



acceptance of a visitation from Mormon missionaries, showed by his response that his gesture was just out of politeness. He said:

They came to visit me. Although I have already been a Buddhist and held my own conviction, I still respected them and listened to them. Although their beliefs could not lead people to obtain the ultimate release, they basically could help people to do good works, so I just listened.<sup>51</sup>

He showed politeness and respect to the missionaries, but his attitude showed that he did not sincerely listen to their views. Even in our interview, I felt that he wanted only to 'teach' me Buddhist beliefs and was uninterested in my Christian beliefs. I got the impression that this Buddhist master indirectly expressed a viewpoint that since Buddhism is superior to other religions, he did not need to understand the faith of others. These interviews show that the monastic class of traditional Buddhism holds a passive attitude to Christian-Buddhist dialogue. They do not reject it, but they are in no hurry to start up a dialogue with other religions.

A friendlier attitude was shown in the interview of an unnamed lay interviewee.<sup>52</sup> She spoke of her experiences working with a Christian in a volunteer ministry of the care for terminal patients at the Kaohsiung General Veteran Hospital (高雄榮民總醫院). Though of different faiths, they cooperated well and were always respectful of each other's beliefs. Their commitment in care for the dying and their positive work experiences allowed them to cross the boundaries of religion to become good friends. In the interview, she spoke of her experiences leading her to admire Christians for really expressing a way of love. This experience is an excellent example that people of two religions putting aside their differences to cooperate in social services for Christian-Buddhist dialogue. However, since traditional Buddhism, as noted in Chapter Two, tends to look down on good works and social engagement, leaves the dialogue of social action grudgingly put into practice between traditional Buddhism and Christianity

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<sup>51</sup> Ruchi (如濟), interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Kaihui Private Temple (開慧精舍), Zhongli (中壢), 18 November 2002. The Chinese text is: '一些摩門教徒也曾經來向我傳過教,我那時已經信佛了,但是我還是很歡迎他們,聽他們講完,幾個鐘頭,因為他們那種精神我們必需尊重,聽他講道,是表示我們對這個宗教和他們精神的尊重,雖然我們有我們自己的看法,但是和他們談還是很歡喜高興.'

<sup>52</sup> An unnamed lay Buddhist, interviewed by Jutta Pan, in the garden of Hsiangkuang Zhuangyang Temple (香光莊嚴寺), Kaohsiung, interviewed without being taped, 21 December 2002.

### 'Humanistic Buddhism'

As with traditional Buddhist leaders, all the interviewees of 'Humanistic Buddhism' expressed that they would not reject dialogue with Christians, with some actually having participated in interactions with Christians, proving that these were more than just polite expressions. However, with the exception of Li Yuansong, there was no interviewee who positively regarded the possibility of the dialogue of doctrine. Their basic perspective is that the differences of doctrines between Buddhism and Christianity are irreconcilable, and can have little interaction on the doctrinal level. At least four of the interviewees thought that, for Buddhism, there is no demonstrable benefit in joint participation of spiritual meditation, or they expressed that their previous experiences of Christian-Buddhist meditative interaction were unhelpful. However, seven of the nine interviewees said that cooperation in social actions between Christianity and Buddhism is possible, and they were gladdened to see their occurrence.

Humanistic Buddhism's open attitude to inter-religious dialogue permitted a willingness to participate in Christian-Buddhist interaction. Some interviewees, such as Li Chifu and Luhuisheng, joined the TCRP or participated in the activities of inter-religious dialogue. Buddhists from some institutes or colleges such as the CIBS and the MCS had visited Christian institutes and seminaries. There are a few dialogues of social action such as the one between Chaohui and Lu Jungyi, and between Shengyang and Cardinal Shan for the common concern of the dignity of lives. The interviewees of Tzuchi, Mrs. Yang and Miss Wu, drew attention to their continued assistance in Christian charity works. But the real assessment of Buddhist economic resources being much larger than Christians' causes difficulty in real cooperation between the two religions. Some interviewees politely wondered what Christians could do in contributing to Buddhist social works. Thus far, there is not any organisation within 'Humanistic Buddhism' that focuses their ministries on Christian-Buddhist dialogue. Except for the dialogue of the MCS and the CLS, and in the FJCU's conferences, no information suggests any other event in the dialogue of doctrines and spiritual experiences.

### Conclusion

Information from qualitative research shows that Traditional Buddhism in Taiwan maintains conservative characteristics. They might provide a certain level of

affirmation of Christianity and other religions, but due to their conviction of Buddhism's superiority, it is hard for them to appropriate the importance of inter-religious dialogue or to take practical steps towards it. As they have a low view of social engagement, it is hard for them to accept the dialogue of social action. While 'Humanistic Buddhism' shares similar concepts as traditional Buddhism, they are opener in their views of inter-religious dialogue. The qualitative research indicates that the dialogue of social action is most likely to be the dialogue that is most accepted by Taiwanese Buddhism. This provision is yet another factor why 'Humanistic Buddhism' may be the most promising community for Christians to dialogue with. Since they are attentive to the human wellbeing, they share a common concern with other religions especially Christianity. However, as they lack an official ministry for inter-religious dialogue, has impeded their interest in Christian-Buddhist dialogue.

### **The Assessment of Christian-Buddhist Dialogue**

#### **An Unsatisfactory but Promising Condition**

Chapter Two and the first half of Chapter Three have described the factual condition of Christian-Buddhist interaction in Taiwan. They have displayed an unsatisfactory picture of Christian-Buddhist interaction in Taiwan but not one devoid of hope. Both religions are coexisting positive and negative features which affect their relationships.

#### **The Positive Features of Christian-Buddhist Relation**

Positive features can present the improvement in Christian-Buddhist relationships. Chapter Two mentioned that several earlier events display the tension and conflicts between the two religions. Since the 1970s, their relationships have seen overall improvements. Interaction between certain sub-groups of the two religions has increased, including visitations, establishment of institutions of inter-religious dialogue, and a subsequent participation. These interactions present opportunities for people of the two religions to build understandings and to forge friendships with each other. Both religions also express a friendlier attitude to each other, this being verified through the interviews, in which most interviewees expressed their appreciation of the virtues and high moral attainment of the other religion. Whether a politeness or a sincere expression, at least it asserts their view that direct criticism and objections are unwise. Therefore, a certain degree of goodwill and tolerance exist between the two religions. The evolution of more programmes for Christian-Buddhist dialogue that

developed since the 1990s, once considered taboo before, are not only approved but, to certain degree, encouraged by some groups within the two religions.

### Negative Features of Christian-Buddhist Relation

The positive developments mentioned above do not mean that Christian-Buddhist relation in Taiwan will necessarily move forward towards greater future advancement. The qualitative research shows that, in reality, Christian-Buddhist dialogue certainly displays some negative features, which could hinder its development. The invisible tension exists between the two religions. Despite improvement in the relationship and value affirmation in interviews, some groups in the two religions like the Pentecostals, part of conservative Christians, and traditional Buddhists, still express a hostile attitude to other religion. Compounded with a greater advancement in terms of the number of believers and social resources, some Buddhist interviewees were also unable to conceal their sense of superiority. This competitive sense causes a lack of genuine inter-religious appreciation.

Superior and exclusive attitudes towards each other impede the intention of both religious towards Christian-Buddhist dialogue. The qualitative research reveals that Christian-Buddhist dialogue has not been widely accepted by the followers of two religions. Many interviewees expressed that they were willing or wouldn't reject having a dialogue with the other religion. Passive expressions such as 'Inter-religious dialogue is good and I will not reject.' and 'If other religious people want to have dialogue with me, I will not reject'<sup>53</sup> reveal that, behind these affirmations, lie perfunctory expressions and passive attitudes. This passive attitude is also revealed by the inconsistency between their expressions and actions. The interviewees, who expressed their willingness to have a dialogue with other religions, did not actually join any event to that effect. The pluralistic situation in Taiwan causes both religions to recognise the necessity of a polite and peaceful relationship between them, but this politeness does not compel a sense of importance towards inter-religious dialogue.

In reality, only a handful of people in the two religions have participated in Christian-Buddhist dialogues. While the academics might show a strong interest in advocating and participating in inter-religious dialogue, their corresponding religions are hesitant to join. Furthermore, many of the active participants in inter-religious

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<sup>53</sup> In interviews, I asked thirty-five interviewees 'whether you are interested in participating to Christian-Buddhist dialogue?' and 'have you participated in any inter-religious dialogue?' Five of eight Buddhists and nine of thirteen Christians gave positive answer to the former question but at the same time gave negative answer to the latter.

dialogue, such as Chan Takkwong and Huang Poho, commented that these dialogues remain at a friendship building level.<sup>54</sup> These dialogues have value in paving the way for future Christian-Buddhist dialogue, but their present shallowness remains to be overcome.

### Problems Awaiting Solutions

The above paragraphs have indicated an unsatisfactory but promising situation of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan. Some problems still exist regarding Christian-Buddhist dialogue. Firstly, what are the factors that impede Christian-Buddhist dialogue? Secondly, how can one properly view and solve these barriers so as to further Christian-Buddhist dialogue? The second half of this chapter will analyse the barriers of Christian-Buddhist dialogue through the information of the qualitative research and attempt to provide possible ways to remove these barriers.

### The Absence of a Consciousness of Inter-religious Dialogue

A major problem for current Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan is that both religions lack a consciousness about inter-religious dialogue. This consciousness includes ideas about the meanings and forms of dialogue, the sense of its importance, and appropriate attitude when engaging in dialogue. Without first having a consciousness about inter-religious dialogue, it is difficult to implement practical actions.

#### The Fact of the Absence of This Consciousness

The qualitative research indicates that, within a plural religious community, this consciousness of inter-religious dialogue is absent in Christianity and Buddhism in Taiwan. The two religions, at best, recognise that in such a society, religions should work to reduce historical tension and maintain a peaceful coexistence, but seldom do they consider the positive significance of inter-religious dialogue. Again, the

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<sup>54</sup> In the interview with Huang, he said: 'He (Father Poulet-Mathis) invited different religious people to attend the meetings and everybody attended because of his invitation, but all were just gathered and made friendships. Beside that, there was no further dialogue.' The Chinese text is: '他(指馬神父)請人(各宗教人士)來,大家都賣他的面子,但是就是來坐坐,建立關係,事實上沒有作甚麼。' Huang Poho, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in President's office, Tainan Presbyterian Theological College and Seminary, 30 October 2002. Chan said: 'I think there might be some dialogues in Taiwan... But they are still shallow... There is no real dialogue and no dialogue of the faiths.' The Chinese text is: '我覺得現在台灣的宗教交談有一些...還很空泛...沒有真正的交談發生,沒有信仰的交談。' Chan Takkong, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in DRS, FJCU, Xingzhuang, 25 November 2002.



interviews reveal this absence. Firstly, with the exception of a few active participants, most of the interviewees were confused and unsure of how to respond to my questions regarding to inter-religious dialogue. I frequently had to explain what was meant by inter-religious dialogue and in what possible forms it could manifest. The concept's unfamiliarity forced me to change my questions to a more indirect interrogatory after the first few interviews in order to get useful answers. This indicates how alien the concept still is.

Secondly, it is the inconsistency between the interviewees' expressions and actions, which best shows that they do not view inter-religious dialogue as an important task. The clergy's latent ignorance of the importance of dialogue is shown that they feel there are more pressing tasks before them than that of inter-religious dialogue.

Thirdly, although some interviewees felt that inter-religious dialogue's importance, they only used it as a focus on keeping peaceful relationships. As sure as these are parts of the overall purpose, they can only be considered the first step of inter-religious dialogue. Besides helping keep harmonious relationships, interviewees did not really expect a deeper function from inter-religious dialogue. In fact recognising the positive motivation of dialogue there is little active initiation.

The absence of a consciousness about inter-religious dialogue raises the question as to why two major religions in a deeply religious pluralist society are so topically unaware. A Catholic scholar, Huang Huaichu (黃懷秋), says that one of the reasons is that inter-religious dialogue started too late in Taiwan.<sup>55</sup> Yet, this statement still does not answer why these religions in such a religious pluralist community cannot recognise the existence of other religions or seek to establish relationships with them. The main reasons possibly lie in the two religions' clerical hierarchy not sensing the context of the plural religious world.

#### Clergy's Ignorance of the Context of the Religious Pluralist World

In Taiwan, both religions are dominated by clerical leadership. Therefore, the clergy's sensitivity to a plural religious society becomes very important. However, the qualitative research shows that the clergy's background, training, life environment, and ministries give them less opportunity to live within the real world and to sense the

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<sup>55</sup> Huang Huaichu, *Religious Dialogue: Theory and Practices—Catholic Church as an Example* (宗教交談的理論與實踐—以天主教為例) in *Religious Dialogue: Theory and Practices*, Taipei, Taiwan: Wunan Books, 2000, 77.



situation of community. In interviews, I asked some clergy whether they have friends who are adherents of other religions. General answers from the Buddhist clergy show that many of them embarked on their monastic lives from childhood, and they have actually lived in near-isolation from believers of other religions. Even though they had met followers of other religions, the boundary created by their positions blocked them from having close interaction with these people.<sup>56</sup> Even though Christian and Buddhist clergy took their ordination in adulthood, they have lived a life isolated from followers of other religions. A typical response was by Chen Yichi (陳儀智), a Presbyterian pastor, saying, 'To be frankly, in the past, I had some (non-Christian friends), but we gradually lost contact. Because of my position, I was isolated... My previous classmates seldom invited me to attend the graduate reunion.'<sup>57</sup>

It is the lay people that seem to have the most opportunity to reach people from other religions. Sixteen of the twenty-one lay interviewees described their different experiences with friends from other religions. Therefore, it is the lay believers who should be reminding their clergy about the reality of the plural religious context. But, since the teaching and leadership responsibilities of their religions are controlled by the clergy, whether or not these lay people's voices can be heard depends on the clerical leaders' own sensitivity to the social context and their willingness to listen to lay people's voices. In interviews, at least half of the lay interviewees took negative attitudes towards their relationships with their friends and had even become isolated because of the teachings of their pastors, thus demonstrating the powerful influence of the clergy on the lay people, especially in their negative views on inter-religious dialogue. In this pluralist context that ought to impact both religions in such a way that they begin to sense the importance of the relationship between the religions, most groups in the two religions still ignore this reality and isolate themselves from the other religion.

#### A Response to the Absence of a Consciousness of the Inter-religious Dialogue

The late start of inter-religious dialogue means that it is not abnormal that the adherents of these two religions still lack a consciousness about inter-religious dialogue. If the vision of inter-religious dialogue spreads to different levels of each

<sup>56</sup> Three of four clergy had similar responses when answering my question.

<sup>57</sup> Chen Yichi (陳儀智), interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Taipingjing Presbyterian Church (太平境長老會), Tainan, 5 December 2002. The Chinese text is: '老實說, 過去有, 現在愈來愈少了, 因為身分的關係, 被抽離了, 他們因為我的身分, 很少邀請我參加同學會.'

religion, this consciousness should be gradually established.

The qualitative research shows that the most effective way to help people grasp the importance of dialogue is to create an environment in which people experience it. But the paradox exists that if there is no consciousness of inter-religious dialogue, how do people have the motivation to participate in it? Finding a strong motivator for people of the two religions to be willing to participate in the dialogue might be a way towards establishing a consciousness of inter-religious dialogue. This begs the question: what will be a strong motivation to spurn Christian-Buddhist dialogue other than the consciousness of inter-religious dialogue? The best clue the qualitative research provides is their common concern for the welfare of the society.

### **The Historical, Political, and Social Factors**

There have been some barriers with respect to the social dimension. Firstly, there is the competitive nature of the concept of the two religions. In addition, there still exists some residual tension among some of the religious leaders. Moreover, the split of political opinion has become a new barrier to Christian-Buddhist dialogue.

#### **The Sense of Competition between Religions**

Previous Christian-Buddhist tension was closely tied to the sense of competition between the two religions, evidenced by their mutual tendency towards criticism. Clear also is the strategy of propagating one's own beliefs through criticising others and through displaying haughty, superior attitude. The competitive sense is also a response in the anxiety of watching another religion rapid growth.

In the 1950s, it was Buddhists anxiety about the growth of Christianity that started the inter-religious battles. In the 1980s, the situation reversed, as Buddhism came into a position of dominance. Many Christian interviewees could not conceal their anxiety about Buddhist revival, and openly criticised Buddhist good works and contributions. As Buddhism currently holds a superior position and doesn't feel the threat from Christianity, in interviews, Buddhists did not show an obvious hostility to Christians, but they could scarce conceal their sense of superiority. During an interview, while mentioning the cooperation of the two religions in social works, an interviewee listed how one Buddhist group helped Christian charity saying, 'we frequently visited Christian orphanages and nursing homes, and served there. We gave them whatever they need. We have donated... support...' <sup>58</sup> While talking about the religious

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<sup>58</sup> Mrs. Yang, interviewed by Zhuchi, in Zhuchi Taipei Branch, 28 November 2002. The Chinese text is:

cooperation in 'the 921 Disaster,' one interviewee said, 'When Father Poulet-Mathis called for the cooperative meeting for the 921 reconstruction, (Our group) sent a representative to attend the meeting. After that, we felt that it was better to do our works rather than attending the meeting... Maybe the total resources of all other groups were less than (ours).'<sup>59</sup> The above two statements, more or less, reveal a Buddhist sense of superiority.

This competition also arises between different groups of the same religion. Many Buddhist scholars especially indicated this condition between different groups of Buddhism. Lu Huishong said:

I feel it is hard for the interaction between different groups of Buddhism. I think it is even harder than the interaction between religions... Every group owns its sphere and every leader does not allow other leaders to share his/her resources and glory. It is all right to have polite social relations, but is impossible to have practical cooperation, because this involves the conflict of sharing the limited resources.<sup>60</sup>

Similar ideas were also presented in the teachings of Master Shengyen. In a book promoting the Dharma Drum Mountain's vision of constructing 'Humanistic Buddhism,' he advised his followers that, 'our missions are multiple but resources are limited...Therefore, we should wholeheartedly dedicate ourselves to our own works and reject demands from other Buddhist groups so as not to disperse our strengths.'<sup>61</sup> The idea of protecting the financial and human resources in order to prevent them from being grasped by other groups causes religious institutions to hesitate from establishing close relationships.

An important reason for the sense of competition is the two religions' concept of

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<sup>59</sup> '有, 我們常常到一些宗教團體作服務, 如果他們有甚麼有甚麼需要向我們申請, 我們都會供應給他們, 像... 我們也捐獻...給...'

<sup>59</sup> The Chinese text is: '馬神父說 921 重建的宗教間要開協調會, 好像第一次(一)有派人來, 但是(一)的人去, 會覺得我 倒不 如回去做我自己的事...可能所有的團體加起來還沒有我們大' the interviewee and the group's name are concealed.

<sup>60</sup> Lu Huishong, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in a café, in Taipei, 21 December 2002. The Chinese text is: 我覺得台灣道場之間交流的不多, 可能比宗教間的交流更難...山頭鼎立, 王不見王...禮貌性的拜訪還可以, 至於實際上的合作不可能, 因為涉及到資源的衝突.'

<sup>61</sup> This speech is quoted from Master Shengyen. *The Common Consciousness of Fagu Mountain in the Direction of Fagu Mountain (法鼓山的共識, 於法鼓山的方向)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Fagu Cultural and Educational Fund (法鼓山文教基金會), 2000, 24. The Chinese text is: '我們的目標任務極多, 我們的人力物力有限...所以除了全力響應我們主動計畫中的各項工作, 應當盡力婉謝其他方面的要求參與, 以免力量分散.'

mission, which focuses on proselytising people to become the followers of their own religions. It is understandable that both religions possess this concept, because they both maintain the uniqueness of their ideologies in human salvation. However, such compassionate motivation quickly narrows the mission down to personal conversion to a specific religious group, and easily loses its original focus into concern for specific religious expansion. To abandon this sense of competition, each religion must reconsider its original missionary concern and seek a broader, more inclusive vision. This might be a breakthrough in the barrier of religious competition.

It is also necessary to reconsider the original missionary strategy of propagating beliefs through criticising other religions. In reality, this mission strategy does not produce the desired effects to conversion as effectively expanding the religions. In an interview, Jiang Chanteng commented about the Christian-Buddhist debates in the 1960s saying:

At that time, the debates between Yinshun and Christianity... actually could not change the situation of the two religions. Yinshun's followers did not increase because of these debates. Christians did not need these debates to acquire superiority. Basically these debates were meaningless for the development of the religions in Taiwan.<sup>62</sup>

Truly, the history of the debates in the 1950s and 1960s shows that this missionary strategy was of no help to the expansion of either religion. A better way of converting people is by proving how religion can provide a solution to human problems and fit the needs of individuals.

In a community with strong secular tendencies, the revival of one religion does not necessarily impact negatively the growth or reputation of others. Cai Lizhen (蔡麗貞), a professor of the China Evangelical Seminary (CES), mentioned an experience in an interview, describing how in a weekly fellowship meeting of professional Christians, a pastor gave a sermon about 'power confrontation' between Christianity and other religions. After his speech, a lay person stood up to express his discontentment. He responded that, in his daily working environment, the revival of Tzuchi did not make his colleagues despise his Christian belief. On the contrary, they

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<sup>62</sup> Jiang Chanteng, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Taiwan University Hospital, Taipei, 20 December 2002. The Chinese text is: '當時印順和基督教的辯論...沒有辦法改變甚麼。印順沒有因為這樣而增加信徒,教會的優勢也不需要靠那個辯論來取得...基本上這些辯論對台灣的宗教發展沒有意義.'

expressed their respect to him as a religious person because they affirmed the value of religion through the good works of Tzuchi.<sup>63</sup> This example shows that religions do not have to remain in a competitive relationship, but rather, they could become partners in gaining people's respect for religion in a highly secular society.

### The Shadow of the Previous Relationship

This competitive sense is also reaffirmed and even strengthened by the shadow of the previous tension between the two religions. At least two historical events had been mentioned by several interviewees. The first was the Buddhist sense of threat from Christianity in the 1950s. At that time, the supports of president and Mrs. Chiang Kaishek for Christianity caused Buddhists to worry that Chiang intended to make Taiwan a Christian country, and thus they were eagerly ready to fight back. There were still some interviewees mentioning Chiang's support of Christianity and suppression of Buddhists,<sup>64</sup> showing the lingering memories of threat held by some Buddhist leaders.

In the 1970s, the PCT's three political statements became another tension-causing event affecting both Buddhism and groups within Christianity. Chapter Two briefly mentioned the PCT's expulsion and criticism from other Christian groups and religions. These criticisms became a source of unforgettable trauma to many of PCT's followers and pastors. In an interview, Lu Jungyi mentioned how the PCT suffered in that situation and expressed how he was still angry at some of the groups in these two religions because, thus far, they've never offered an apology.<sup>65</sup> These examples, together with historical tension and competitiveness, caused the still existing gap between the Christianity and Buddhism and even between the PCT and other Christian groups. Inter-religious dialogue still lives in the shadows of suspicion between these unreconciled groups.

### Political Discrepancy

The gap between the PCT and other religious groups is not just a historical barrier but also a current one of Christian-Buddhist dialogue. Since the 1970s, the PCT's contextual theology advocated the self-determination of Taiwan and later focused on

<sup>63</sup> Cai Lizhen (蔡麗貞), interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in China Evangelical Seminary (中華福音神學院), Taipei, 22 November 2002.

<sup>64</sup> At least Chaohui and Mr. Wen Jingke (溫金柯) mentioned this history.

<sup>65</sup> Lu Junyi, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Dongmen Presbyterian Church, Taipei (台北東門長老教會), 7 January 2003.



promoting the independence of Taiwan. This sentiment standpoint is clearly carried in the PCT's new statement, "In the name of 'the Republic of Taiwan', walk Taiwan's own path (以台灣國名, 行台灣路)."<sup>66</sup> Such a political standpoint is vastly different from that of most Buddhist and other Christian groups, which either still hold a strong Chinese identity, advocate separation from China without officially claiming independence, or assert that religions should stay away from politics.

Chapter Two has mentioned that a difference of political standpoint had caused the PCT's members to withdraw from some dialogue activities and organisations. The PCT's political standpoint also drew suspicion from other groups and retarded their intention to dialogue with PCT. In an interview, Huiyang said, 'I would not reject any opportunity for Christian-Buddhist dialogue on the condition that there was not any political intention behind this dialogue.'<sup>67</sup> Though maybe not a thing-veiled reference to the PCT, she clearly expressed that she did not want the dialogue mixed with any political element. Ho Huiqun mentioned that Poulet-Mathis' friendship with the PCT had caused the criticisms from the CCT's believers, over their disagreement with the PCT's political appeals.<sup>68</sup>

### **The Concept of Uniqueness and an Exclusive Tendency**

Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan is hindered by both religions' adherence to a strong concept of absoluteness in their doctrines, which is the notion that its followers must remain faithful to the 'one and only' essence of their religions. The question is whether remaining faithful to this 'one and only' religious essence while still respecting the truth and virtue of the other religion poses an intractable interactive dilemma or if a satisfactory balance can be attained. This concept of absoluteness is delivered from the theology of religions, of each religion's view towards other beliefs and on their relationship towards them.

### **Models of Theology of Religions**

<sup>66</sup> *In the Name of Republic of Taiwan Walk Taiwanese Own Path—The Statement of the Movement of Correcting the Name of Taiwan and of Joining the United Nations* (以台灣國名, 行台灣路—台灣國家正名, 加入聯合國運動宣言), Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2002.

<sup>67</sup> Huiyang, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Fenshang Lotus Buddhist Society, 9 December 2002. The Chinese text is: '如果有宗教交談的機會, 我是不會拒絕的, 只要背後沒有甚麼別的動機...就是沒有不良的政治動機.'

<sup>68</sup> Ho Huiqun, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in the office of CIDE, Taipei, 18 December 2002.



Alan Race, in his *Christians and Religious Pluralism*, classified the religious sense of absoluteness into three models, indicating whether Christianity or other religions hold the sole path to salvation.<sup>69</sup> Although these models of the theology of religions originally dealt with Christian views of other religions, these three models can also be analogously applied to those of other religions. The first model is exclusivism, which believes that 'one religion is in solo possession of effective religious truth and offers the only path to salvation.'<sup>70</sup> The second model is inclusivism, which affirms the value of the possibility of salvation in other path or religions, but lays priority to the path of their own religion. The third model is pluralism, which holds the concept that all religions stand in an equal place and are different paths to the same end.

Different concepts of the theology of religions hold different views towards inter-religious dialogue. For the extreme exclusivists, there is no place for inter-religious dialogue. For inclusivists and moderate exclusivists, inter-religious dialogue still has its validity. However, from the perspective of pluralists, unless a religion puts itself on the same level as other religions, authentic dialogue can not happen.<sup>71</sup>

These three models exist among various groups of both religions in Taiwan. However, most Christians and Buddhists generally hold onto sense of exclusivism or inclusivism towards other religions in which these tendencies acts as another barrier of Christian-Buddhist dialogue.

#### Models of Theology of Religions in Christian Churches in Taiwan

**Pluralist Christian Scholars and Pastors:** The pluralist view on Christian relationships to other religions exists only in some theologians and clergy of the CCT and the PCT. The scholars of the DRS, FJCU clearly hold a pluralist standpoint as do some scholars and pastors of the PCT. These Christian pluralists play active roles in inter-religious dialogue. Among these Christian pluralists, the CCT's academicians show their intentions and actions by promoting inter-religious dialogue. In the beginning, the PCT's scholars actively participated in the dialogue, but some withdraw later. The crucial factor is whether the scholars themselves view the dialogue as

<sup>69</sup> Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions*, London: SCM LTD, 1983.

<sup>70</sup> S. Mark Heim, *The Depth of the Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001, 3.

<sup>71</sup> Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002, 103-104.

important and if churches support it or not. Since the number of these pluralists is few, they still do not influence the Christian churches in Taiwan much.

**The CCT as Inclusivism:** The CCT mainly holds inclusivist values in which the churches officially express their welcome of inter-religious dialogue. However, some clergy called attention the problem of the doctrinal discrepancy between religions and claimed that the Church could not compromise over these issues. The CCT's standpoint of inclusivism means that, although inter-religious dialogue is an official policy of the Roman Catholic Church, current inter-religious interaction in the CCT is restricted mainly to social actions.

**Protestant Churches as Exclusivism:** Protestant churches, including the MPC and the majority of the PCT are mainly exclusivists. They either completely reject dialogue with other religions, because they view it as valueless, or, although expressing their appreciation of the value of Christian-Buddhist dialogue, they place it in a small position in their ministry. There are still some proponents of Christian exclusivism considering dialogue of social action an essential ministry of the Church,<sup>72</sup> but the general view of exclusivism exerts its influence in restricting churches in Taiwan from viewing the necessity of inter-religious dialogue.

#### Buddhism as Exclusive Inclusivism

Buddhism is usually considered less aggressive and exclusive than Christianity. However, this does not mean that Buddhists do not have their own exclusive sense. Buddhists usually claim that paths to Nirvāṇa are not limited to Buddhist institutions. Anyone who eliminates craving and finds their inner Buddha nature can attain Nirvāṇa, and get release from Saṃsāra and the suffering of this world. However, they still claim that the most effective and sometimes the only path to Nirvāṇa is directly from the teachings of the Buddha.

Except for a few Buddhist scholars and followers, my interviews with most of the Buddhist interviewees held to either exclusivism or exclusive inclusivism. When I asked eight interviewees the question whether other religions contain the path to Nirvāṇa, no one interviewee affirmed the possibility that there is a path for Christians

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<sup>72</sup> There are some important leaders in MPC holding this perspective. These leaders include Zhou Lianhua, the president of World Vision and former president of Chinese Evangelical Movement, and Chen Chifeng (陳啓峰), the chairperson of Pastor Council, Methodist Church in the R.O.C.

to acquire complete release from the suffering of Saṃsāra. One interviewee simply avoided answering this question. Three interviewees, one leader and two lay people, left this question as an unknown. Four interviewees, three leaders and one lay person, emphasised that only Buddha teaches the right path and politely claimed that other religions can only attain the realm of the heavens. Therefore, although Buddhist interviewees affirm the value of good religions and place them in a high regard, the answers of these interviewees showed that they do not place these religions at the same level as Buddhism and still believe that Buddhist paths are unique and superior to those of other religions.

This sense of absoluteness causes Buddhism in Taiwan to accept limited interaction in Christian-Buddhist dialogue. This sense of exclusivism means that Buddhists in Taiwan do not consider it necessary for them to have dialogue of doctrine and spiritual experience with Christians. The only dialogue Buddhists popularly accept is the dialogue of social action, and Buddhists even give different evaluations of this dialogue, because of their discrepancy of views on the value of good works and this world. Humanistic Buddhist groups give a higher value to religious contribution to human this-worldly welfare and therefore hold an open attitude towards the dialogue of social action, while on the other hand, paying less attention to the value of good works and other religions, traditional Buddhists in Taiwan basically don't consider the dialogue of social action as important task. Generally, the sense of absoluteness also becomes a barrier for Buddhists for Christian-Buddhist dialogue.

### The Response to the Doctrinal Exclusive Tendency

The greater barrier is the sense of absoluteness among the two religions, because it touches upon certain important theological/buddhological premises, which are not easily changed. One possible way to resolve this barrier is, as Christian pluralists claim, to change each religion's inherent theological/buddhological premises so that the two religions can abandon their sense of absoluteness and stand on the same level and dialogue without any barrier. However, this solution is much too simplistic to be applied to inter-religious dialogue and does not fit with the current situation of the two religions in Taiwan.

Firstly, for most religious adherents, it is hard for them to give up their sense of absoluteness and commitment to their beliefs. As Heinrich Dumoulin said, 'no true religious conviction can exist without a claim to an absolute validity.'<sup>73</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>73</sup> Heinrich Dumoulin, *Christianity Meets Buddhism*, translated by John C. Maraldo, Lasalle, Illinois:

there is another aspect on the relationship between the sense of absoluteness and dialogue. Maha Sthavira Sangharakshita, an English Buddhist scholar, claims that real Christian-Buddhist dialogue happens between 'the persons of a fully committed Buddhist and a firmly believing Christian.'<sup>74</sup> From this point of view, it is necessary for people who participate in the dialogue to have full commitment to their beliefs rather than giving them up. Therefore, this sense of absoluteness with regard to one's own beliefs and the attitude of respect for other's beliefs become a paradox in the dialogue, which needs to keep the two ideas in balance.

Secondly, Christian pluralists insist on the importance of religious people abandoning the sense of absoluteness, so as to have authentic dialogue. This claim, to a certain degree, shows the inappropriateness of some extreme Christian exclusivists' attitude towards other religions and is likely the root of their inability to have dialogue with other religions. However, some examples of dialogue in Taiwan do not demonstrate that it is impossible for people a sense of absoluteness to have dialogue with other religious people. The dialogue of the MCS and the CLS, and that of Chaohui and Lu Jungyi, shows that retaining a sense of absoluteness does not necessarily contradict the attitude of respecting the other beliefs, for it is still possible to have authentic dialogue. Leu Yizhong (呂一中), one of the main participants in the dialogue of the MCS and the CLS, even commented that:

It is each side's adherence to their sense of absoluteness that won the respect of the other and caused the dialogue to proceed... They (MCS) appreciated that you sincerely adhere to your beliefs, and if you did not adhere to your beliefs, they would feel angry.<sup>75</sup>

This proves that adhering to one's own beliefs still enables one to have authentic dialogue and sometimes even win over the respect of the other side.

A related question is whether there is a standard criterion in defining the meaning and the goal of an authentic dialogue? Or as Ajaltoun Memorandum, a Buddhist leader,

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Open Court Publishing Company, 1974, 34.

<sup>74</sup> Maha Sthavira Sangharakshita, *Dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity* in *Buddhism and Christianity*, ed., Claude Geffre' and Mariasusai Dhavamony, New York, New York: The Seabury Press, 1979, 61.

<sup>75</sup> Leu Yizhong, interviewed by Jutta Pan, in Taiwan Presbyterian Theological College and Seminary, Taipei, 26 November 2002. Its Chinese text is: '在這個交談中，堅持自己的信仰向而會受到對手的尊重...但是他們就是欣賞你認真，如果你不認真，他們就會有點生氣.'

said, 'the meaning, basis, and purpose of dialogue is related to particular contexts.'<sup>76</sup> To define certain meanings as a criterion of inter-religious dialogue results in the danger of another sense of absoluteness, some interviewees, who have participated in the international inter-religious dialogue programmes, according to the criteria of academic standards or other countries' experiences, asserted that some inter-religious dialogue programmes in Taiwan are genuine, in depth dialogue and some are not. However, they neglected to mention that inter-religious dialogue in different countries should be considered as distinctive. Therefore, there must be a multiple criterion in which to evaluate whether dialogue really happened or not in each different context. The forms and function of a dialogue should be decided by its subjects in their own context.

The final problem is that holding a strong sense of absoluteness is the reality in Taiwanese Christianity and Buddhism. Advocating the importance of giving up a religious uniqueness so as to have authentic dialogue with other religions will not help to eliminate the sense of absoluteness, but will strengthen suspicions that dialogue will lead to religious syncretism. Therefore, expecting both religions to give up their sense of absoluteness and accept a pluralist concept is unrealistic. The proper direction to push the inter-religious dialogue between two religions is help them to respect and appreciate the value of the other.

### **The Discrepancy of Beliefs between Two Religions**

Mervyn Fernando claims that Christianity and Buddhism have an entirely different world-views and belief systems, with large doctrinal discrepancies between them.<sup>77</sup> These doctrinal discrepancies between Christianity and Buddhism are also obvious in Taiwan and cause the fourth barrier of Christian-Buddhist dialogue. Their discrepancies are described mainly in three aspects namely, their definition of Ultimate Reality, the approach in comprehending the Truth, and the means toward human destiny.

#### **A Personal God vs. An Impersonal Reality**

There is a discrepancy about who or what the Ultimate Reality is between Christianity and Buddhism in Taiwan. Christians believe in the existence of the one

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<sup>76</sup> S. J. Samartha ed., *Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1971, 29.

<sup>77</sup> Mervyn Fernando, *The Buddhist Challenge to Christianity in the Buddhism and Christianity*, edited by Claude Geffre and Marisusai Dhavamony, New York, New York: The Seabury Press, 1979, 89.

and only personal God, who created and governs this cosmos. Furthermore, they also consider Jesus Christ, the incarnation of God who accomplishes salvation for people by his death and resurrection, to be the center of Christian beliefs. Unlike Christian monotheism, orthodox Buddhists in Taiwan hold an atheist belief. They claim that there is no origin of this cosmos and, therefore, there is no Creator. This does not mean that Buddhism does not accept the existence of Ultimate Reality, but they claim that Ultimate Reality is impersonal and defined as the Dharma, the universal principle of this world, and the path towards liberation. This fundamental difference results in a misunderstanding between the two religions. Many Buddhists subordinate the Christian concept of God to the Buddhist concept of deities in the realm of heaven and thus consider it to be a proof of Buddhist superiority.<sup>78</sup> In an interview, Chan Takkwong mentioned a case in an inter-religious conference where a Christian linked Buddhism to materialism and Communism because Buddhism does not believe in a personal God and the existence of the soul.<sup>79</sup> These misunderstandings divide the two religions between a wall of alienation.

#### Revelation vs. Personal Experience in Comprehending the Truth

The discrepancy between the two religions is also shown in their different approaches to comprehend the truth. Christianity is a religion of revelation. The way to know God or the Truth is through the revelation of God through the incarnation of Jesus and the Bible. Therefore, these are the main sources of comprehending the Truth and give the authority to the Christian belief. Buddhism alternatively is a non-revelational religion. Its belief is established solely on the analysis of human experiences and the state of Chan, a state where the practitioner can break down all barriers from external phenomenon and gain an authentic vision of the Truth.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, the Buddhist source of truth-knowing is through the efforts of the self.

Both religions viewed that the other religion's way of comprehending the truth as inconceivable. Chaohui said, in an interview:

As a Buddhist nun, I establish my faith on daily experiences, which is the

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<sup>78</sup> Chapter Two has mentioned that several interviews provided this view from Buddhism.

<sup>79</sup> Chan Takkong, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in DRS, FJCU, Xingzhuang, 25 November 2002.

<sup>80</sup> According to Li Yuansong in an interview, Chan (禪) is not a path of skill or practice but a state. Western understanding of meditation is called Chan-ding (禪定), which is the path to help people to attain the state of Chan. Li Yuansong, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in MCS, Taipei, 30 December 2002.



concept of causes and effects (pratītya-samutpāda). However, Christian belief in the existence of God is metaphysical and beyond experiences. That is the problem with Christianity, because to establish belief in a foundation beyond experiences is very difficult.<sup>81</sup>

Christians also tend to evaluate their belief as direct from the revelation of God and Buddhist belief as merely steaming from human imagination. Therefore, they would claim Christianity's superiority to Buddhism, and the dialogue with Buddhism of little value.

#### External Effort vs. Self-effort in Solving Human Problems

Christianity and Buddhism are both acknowledge the human problem but are of different minds in interpreting its cause and providing a solution. The crucial point is whether this solution is through self-effort or through external help. Christianity considers the source of human suffering to be Sin. The way to achieve release from suffering is to reconcile oneself with God through the salvation of Jesus Christ which allows admission into the Kingdom of God by faith. This salvation is directly a result of grace, as people can do nothing to acquire it. Buddhism in Taiwan, on the contrary, displays a strong foundation in self-effort. People can not rely on Buddha or other external help but must attain liberation through their own efforts. The only Buddhist belief that is considered parallel to Christian salvation is the belief in Amitābha. But this belief has been strongly criticised and rejected by 'Humanistic Buddhism.' As they claim that the Amitābha belief has deviated from the Buddhist characteristic of self-effort.

This discrepancy causes the two religions in Taiwan to be at odds with each other. to undertake human problems, a concept constantly arising in the writings of Yinshun. He views beliefs dependent on external efforts to obtain salvation, such as Christianity or Buddhist Amitābha belief, as 'beliefs that lack manliness (缺乏丈夫氣).'<sup>82</sup> On the other hand, Christians consider Buddhist ways of self-dependence to be ignorant of human limitations and impossible to attain.

<sup>81</sup> Chaohui, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Horngshi Buddhist College, Kuanyin, 23 December 2002. The Chinese text is: '身為一個佛教的出家人, 我是建立 (我的信仰) 在日常可經驗的事務上...而基督徒對上帝的信徒只能訴諸信心, 形上的, 超經驗的, 這是一個基督徒要面對的問題...在超經驗的事務上建立信仰, 那是極大的挑戰.'

<sup>82</sup> Yinshun (印順), *A Shallow Description of Calling Buddha's Names (念佛淺說)* in *Pure Land and Chan (淨土與禪)*, rev. ed., Taipei, Taiwan: Zhengwu Publishing (正聞出版社), 1995, 91.

### The Discrepancies as Barriers of the Dialogue

These discrepancies cause people in the two religions to be hesitant to begin a dialogue with each other. Christian churches in Taiwan are more willing to engage dialogue with Confucianism and the tribal beliefs because parallel beliefs are easier to find with Christianity. Zheng Yangen also expressed similar perspective, saying:

I easily find parallels between Christianity and the beliefs of Taiwanese aborigines and am glad to work on Christian dialogue with them. However, I find the discrepancy between Christianity and other traditional religions very obvious, so I am not interested in making comparisons and having conversation with them.<sup>83</sup>

Furthermore, these discrepancies also cause many religious leaders to discourage lay people to participate in dialogue with the other beliefs to avoid confusing them. In interviews, at least six Christian and two Buddhist clergy mentioned that they would not let the lay people attend dialogues because it might cause doubt in their own faiths.

Facing these discrepancies, some churches leaders take an attitude of discrepancy avoidance seeking the common points between the two religions. With this attitude, Bishop Zheng Zhaifang mentioned his experiences of dialogue, saying, 'In the meetings of inter-religious dialogue, we avoided talking about each other's doctrines, so as not to show our discrepancies and even to cause arguments... We focused on the common points so that we could appreciate each other's value.'<sup>84</sup> Li Chifu also said, 'It is all right that each has its own beliefs. Christianity believes in the eternal life. It is all right. We bless this... I think the dialogue of social action is no problem. As to the concepts related to beliefs, I believe that we don't need to force two beliefs to unite.'<sup>85</sup> This attitude is constructive and helpful in making friendships between two religions, but

<sup>83</sup> Zheng Yangen, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Taiwan Presbyterian Theological College and Seminary, Taipei, 20 November 2002. The Chinese text is: '我認爲基督教和原住民傳統宗教較容易相容...沒有很大的衝突,但是對我而言比較困擾的是世界大宗教...所以我較不沒有興趣很快的跳入這些宗教的關聯和比較.'

<sup>84</sup> It is expressed in Bishop Zheng's interview with Father Li Zhexiu. Its content is quoted from Li Zhexiu, *Catholic Church in Asia and Inter-religious Dialogue*, RsM. Dissertation, Fugen Catholic University, 1995, 78. The Chinese text is: '在開會期間,雙方都沒有講自己的道理,怕遠講越遠,甚至到了面紅耳赤,那多不好...所以有共同點,彼此可以欣賞.'

<sup>85</sup> Li Chifu, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in CIBS, Zingshan, 27 December 2002. The Chinese text is: '關於兩個宗教信仰的不同,那沒有關係,你信你自己的,基督教信永生,我們祝福啊...我想社會關懷的交談是絕對可以的,至於信仰,那是內心的事,我覺得也不必強求合一,合一只是和稀泥.'

still restricts the effects of the dialogue in specific situations.

### The Response to the Discrepancy between the Two Religions

In focusing only on the doctrinal sphere of the two religions, it is easy to conclude that the two religions have fundamental discrepancies which cannot easily reach a common ground to start a dialogue. However, if the comparison is extended ethically, there exist deep parallels between the two religions. The basic parallel community is that of the Buddhist concept of compassion and the Christian concept of love. Buddhist compassion is especially shown in the belief of the Bodhisattva Path, derived from the example of Śākyamuni Buddha. Christian love is shown by Christ's self-emptying (Phil 2:6) and willingness to sacrifice himself, dying on the cross to save people from the bondage of Sin. These two examples of religious icons display similarity in the spirit of giving oneself to the service of others.

Through this common inner compassion, Taiwanese Buddhists and Christians both have motivations to commit themselves to the reformation of this world and towards people's welfare. The qualitative research demonstrates that people of the two religions can easily cooperate in positive social actions. In these situations, religious differences are ignored in the face of a common social goal. These common ethical elements, their motivation of compassion/love, and the practice of good deeds might cause the two religions to realise the common goal of bringing welfare to people and the community.

Therefore, if the focus is transferred from doctrine to ethics, both religions can find concurrent parallels between them. If both can respect the differences of doctrines and temporarily set them aside, these ethical parallels can become a starting point for Christian-Buddhist dialogue and a possible means to avoid the barrier of doctrinal discrepancies in dialogue.

### Conclusion

The findings of the qualitative research reported in this chapter demonstrate that Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan has not yet developed to any significant extent beyond establishing cordial relationships between select Christians and Buddhists, who recognise the need to overcome the legacy of suspicion and alienation between the two religious communities. The research findings indicate that the inter-religious dialogue that has taken place has been promoted mainly by individuals, and has not yet attracted extensive support within their respective communities. This observation is

confirmed by the paucity of institutional initiatives in dialogue, and the fact that, with the only exception of the CCT's Commission for Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenical Cooperation, no religious community has established an official institute or programme of inter-religious dialogue. The evidence of the interviews does not permit us to conclude that most Christians and Buddhists are opposed to inter-religious dialogue. On the contrary, most agree that it is a good idea, and would be worth pursuing if they had the opportunity, though few actually do so. This confirms the second hypothesis put forward in the Introduction of this thesis: that Christianity and Buddhism in Taiwan, while showing an increasingly tolerant attitude to each other, have so far failed to develop active dialogue between them, due both to uncertainty as to what the dialogue might entail, and a lingering mutual suspicion of both a social and religious character. While individual initiatives are promising in their efforts and results, they have yet to stimulate support within their wider religious communities.

The research has also clarified that the most promising form of inter-religious dialogue is that of social action, in which Christians and Buddhists address common social challenges in Taiwan. With the exception of the dialogue between China Lutheran Seminary and Modern Chan Society, the dialogue of doctrine has happened in the academic sphere and has had little impact on the religious communities themselves. The dialogue of spiritual experience only occurred in the CCT's one-sided learning meditation from Chan Buddhism, since the Buddhists have shown little interest in Catholic spirituality. It appears that the dialogue of social action is the one that occurs more regularly, and shows deep insights in some events. This suggests that the dialogue of action is the most promising direction for Christians and Buddhists to develop an initial dialogue in Taiwan.

This hypothesis is further confirmed by the evidence in the second half of this chapter in which several of the factors that impede current Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan, the most crucial lie in popular perceptions of the discrepancies of doctrines between the two religions and their respective sense of uniqueness in the realm of ultimate destiny. Doctrinal differences continue to act as barriers in the sense that people suppose there is no common ground on which dialogue could begin, or that a supposed common ground would entail some reduction of Christian or Buddhist beliefs. In this, several of the interviewed clergy of the two religions expressed the view that a dialogue of doctrine should be reserved for academically trained religious professionals, and should not include lay people.

If the conclusion to which the qualitative research points us is that the most

promising form of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan is the dialogue of social action, we face the ongoing question of how this conclusion can also be established on a firm theoretical foundation. For this, empirical data provides very little material with which to work. While several interviewees agreed that a dialogue of social action in the ethical sphere would be more productive than doctrinal or spiritual dialogue, none was able to give this a theological rationale. It is to this challenge, therefore, that we turn in Part Three of the thesis.

## Chapter Four

### Building up a Contextual Model of Christian-Buddhist Dialogue

#### Introduction

As Part Two of this thesis has argued, on the basis of the findings of the qualitative research, the most promising direction for Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan is through the dialogue of social action. The purpose of Part Three is to elaborate the theoretical foundations on which a dialogue of social action can be justified in contextual terms. The research questions to be addressed can be simply stated: can a dialogue of social action between Christians and Buddhists in Taiwan commend itself on a theoretical basis in relation to modern trends within the Christian and Buddhist communities? If the answer to this first question is affirmative, the second question follows: how might a Christian-Buddhist dialogue of social action begin to be constructed on the basis of empirical needs and practical theory?

In answering these questions, it is essential to expatiate on theoretical understandings of dialogue pertaining to the Taiwanese context, drawing primarily from Taiwanese resources. As Part One of this thesis has shown, the history of religious developments in Taiwan has depended heavily on foreign imports. If a Taiwanese theology of dialogue is to establish roots in Taiwanese soil, it has to start with the Taiwanese themselves and their context, rather than imitative approaches to, and experiences of inter-religious dialogue, which have validity elsewhere, but lack a authenticity in Taiwan itself. This is not to deny the significance of international developments of inter-religious dialogue, nor to prejudge them as being irrelevant to Taiwan. Rather, as will be demonstrated at various points in Part Three, a contextual Taiwanese understanding of inter-religious dialogue may contribute to, and itself be informed by other approaches to inter-religious dialogue in Asia, and the emerging global understanding of the challenge of religious pluralism.

The present chapter begins this inquiry by examining the theological legacy of Taiwan's two most influential Christian theologians, and the broader religious-cultural tradition that infuses both the Christian and the Buddhist communities of Taiwan. The two theologians are Shoki Coe and C. S. Song, pioneers of Taiwanese Protestant theology and influential figures in the development of the Taiwanese Protestant Churches in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Each recognised the importance of inter-religious dialogue for the contextualisation of Christianity in Taiwan. An analysis of Coe's and Song's lectures and writings will be the main focus of the first



part of this chapter, in which it will be demonstrated that both theologians recognised that a contextual inter-religious dialogue must be rooted in the cultural soil that Christianity and Buddhism share in Taiwan, and must address the socio-economical issues that challenge them both.

Following the lead from the theological insights presented by Coe and Song, the second part of this chapter identifies the common cultural values from which Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan can draw. In light of the fact that most Taiwanese are Han Chinese who have migrated from China during different historical periods, it will be argued that the most productive way of establishing Christian-Buddhist dialogue is on the shared values left by the common legacy of Confucianism. This is not to advocate a return to Confucianism as the operative ideology of powerful elite, or to seek a reversal of its institutional decline at the end of the KMT political dictatorship. Rather, it is to recognise that Confucian values played an important role in shaping Taiwanese cultural identity, and continue to be a diffuse influence in the Taiwanese worldview that encourages all Taiwanese to take a responsible approach to the common good of society. It is in this sense that the second part of this chapter will explore the distinctive belief elements of Confucianism, and consider the degree to which they offer an ethical orientation that can be claimed equally by Taiwanese Christians and Buddhists in search of a religious-cultural basis for Christian-Buddhist dialogue.

In the final part of this chapter will relate Chapters Two and Three's empirical research to the emerging theoretical construct of Christian-Buddhist dialogue, illustrating how the common cultural soil of Confucian values could be a helpful contextual resource for a Christian-Buddhist dialogue of social action in Taiwan. It will be noted that this corresponds with the model of Christian-Buddhist dialogue developed by Lynn de Silva in Sri Lanka, who recommends the praxis of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in social action.

The analysis of Coe's approach to inter-religious dialogue will focus extensively on his understanding of contextualisation because, in his thinking, these two concepts are inextricable. Coe's concepts of contextualisation and inter-religious dialogue are set out in a lecture entitled 'A Rethinking of Theological Training for the Ministry in the Younger Church Today', that he gave at 'Principals' Conferences of South Eastern Asian Theological Schools (PCSEATS)' while he was principal of the TTCS, and in a booklet entitled, 'Ministry in Context' written when he was Director of the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches (TEF). A

comprehensive study of these two articles has been made by William P. Russell in his book, 'Contextualization: Origins, Meanings, and Implications,'<sup>1</sup> and by Chen Nanzhou in his essay, 'Theology of Identification,'<sup>2</sup> which especially points out the significance of Coe's contribution to the construction of Taiwanese theology.

The sources for the analysis of Song's thinking are mainly from his writings,<sup>3</sup> with support from Kenneth Fleming's dissertation, 'Asian Christian Theologies in Dialogue with Buddhism'<sup>4</sup> which gives a valuable assessment of Song's work in Christian-Buddhism dialogue. The study of Confucian belief is based on the primary sources of the Analects, the speeches of Confucius with supplementary sources, and the writings of Julia Ching.<sup>5</sup> The sources for the argument of Confucianism's mainstream social foundation are the writings about the twin development of Chinese and Taiwanese cultures written by Chinese and Taiwanese religious and philosophical scholars.<sup>6</sup> The recommended praxis of Christian-Buddhist dialogue based on a theoretical foundation is adopted from the writings of Song, and of Lynn de Silva, which is mainly derived from his 'The Problem of the Self in Buddhism and Christianity.'<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See William P. Russell, *Contextualization: Origins, Meaning and Implications-- A Study of What the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches Originally Understood by the Term "Contextualization"*, with Special Reference to the Period 1970-1972, Ph.D. diss., Apud Pontificium University S. Thomae in Urbe, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> See Chen Nanzhou, *Theology of Identification—Protestant Construction of Indigenous Theology in the Context of Taiwan* (認同的神學—基督新教在台灣實況中本土神學的建構), Logos (道), December 2001, no. 5, 77-89.

<sup>3</sup> These writings include Song's *The Believing Heart*, *Theology from the Womb of Asia*, and *The Third-Eye Theology: Theology in Formation in Asian Settings*, Guildford and London: Lutterworth Press, 1972.

<sup>4</sup> See Kenneth Fleming, *Asian Christian Theologians in Dialogue with Buddhism: A Study of the Writings of Kosuke Koyama, Choan-Seng Song, and Aloysius Pieris*, Ph.D. diss., The University of Edinburgh, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> See Ching's writings in Hans Kung and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions*, New York, New York: Doubleday, 1989, and Julia Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity: A Comparative Study*, New York, New York: Kodansha International, 1977.

<sup>6</sup> These publications include Parng Pwu (龐樸), *The Humanistic Spirit of Chinese Culture* (中國文化的人文主義精神) in the *Reconsideration of Chinese Culture*, VI, *The Characteristics of Chinese Traditional Culture* (中國傳統文化的再檢討, 上編, 中國傳統文化的特徵), The Department of History, Fudan University ed. (上海復旦大學歷史系編), Hong Kong: Shangwu Publishing (香港:商務印書館), 1987; Wei Zhengtong (韋政通), *Confucianism and Modern China* (儒家與現代中國), Shanghai, China: People Publishing (中國上海:人民出版社), 1990; Wang Zhianchuan and Lee Shiwei, *Luzhou, Religions and Cultures in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Boy Young, 1999, Yu Jie ed. (余喆), *Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Traditional Culture* (儒、佛、道與傳統文化), Beijing, China: Chinese Books (中國北京:中華書局), 1996; and Zheng Zhiming (鄭志明) ed., *Religion and Culture* (宗教與文化), Taipei, Taiwan: Xuesheng Books (學生書局), 1990.

<sup>7</sup> Lynn de Silva, *The Problem of the Self in Buddhism and Christianity*, London: The Macmillian Press Ltd, 1975.

## **Constructing a Contextual Model through the Thinking of Shoki Coe and C. S. Song**

Christianity's foreign perception does not mean that the three main Christian traditions in Taiwan do not make efforts towards pursuing contextualisation of Christianity. In fact, since the 1960s, the CCT has been devoted to the inculturation of the Christian faith in Taiwan. There were also fragmentary cases of the Church's indigenisation in the expression of Christian faith, such as in the liturgy and church buildings. Among these works, the theological thinking of two PCT theologians, Shoki Coe and C. S. Song, stand prominently in rooting the Church in the soil of Taiwan. Coe and Song sensed that Christianity's contextualisation could not exist only in outward expression, but had to ingrain itself deeply in Taiwanese culture. Their thinking laid the foundation of the PCT's contextual theology and inspired theological developments in many Third World churches.

Coe and Song both grew up in Taiwan, confirmed their faiths in PCT, and became its theologians and church leaders later. Their background shows that the formation of their theologies was greatly influenced by domestic culture and religions, and by this it is assured that their theologies can be resources for establishing an inter-religious dialogue suitable for the Taiwanese context. This section will study Coe's concept of contextualisation as well as Song's theology in order to explore how their thinking can inspire a contextual model of inter-religious dialogue. It will be divided into Coe's contextualisation, Song's theology, and the assessment and application of their thinking.

### **Shoki Coe's Contextualisation**

Shoki Coe was one of the few Taiwanese Christians in his time who received an overseas theological education, and the first Taiwanese theologian to become principal of the Tainan Theological College and Seminary (TTCS) from 1947 to 1965 CE. In his mandate as principal, and as the moderator of the General Assembly of the PCT, he already sensed the importance of Asian churches seeking contextualisation in their own cultures. This conviction was expressed in his lecture, 'A Rethinking of Theological Training for the Ministry in the Younger Church Today', at PCSEATS. After 1965 CE, Coe joined the TEF of the WCC. In 1972 CE, the TEF proposed the concept of contextualisation, which was presented in a booklet entitled 'Ministry in Context.' William P. Russell indicates that, as the director of TEF in the third mandate

period, 'every part of the TEF's definition of the contextualization was fully integrated with Shoki Coe's theological thinking.'<sup>8</sup> The 'Ministry in Context' is thus one of the best resources to understand Coe's thinking.

These two articles are comprehensively analysed by William P. Russell in his 'Contextualization: Origins, Meaning, and Implications.' In addition, the writing of the PCT theologian, Chen Nanzhou (陳南州), about the PCT's theological development also displays value in understanding Coe's thinking from a theologian position. The following paragraphs will firstly analyse Coe's theological convictions through his lecture in PCSEATS, then describe the meaning and characteristics of contextualisation in the 'Ministry in Context,' and finally assess its application to the Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan.

'A Rethinking of Theological Training for the Ministry in the Younger Churches Today'

### **Threefold Direction of Ministry**

As a theological educator and a Church leader, Coe pays primary attention to the ministry of the Church and sees a close relationship between ministry and theological education. He claims that the Church is elected to continue the ministry of Christ and, to understand the ministry of the Church, it is important to recognise the ministry of Christ. Coe indicates that Christ's ministry includes a threefold direction of ministry: the direction to God, to the many (world), and to the disciples (the elected).<sup>9</sup> In terms of their relationship, these threefold direction is inextricably related to each other.<sup>10</sup> Coe also asserts that the real state of the Church's ministry is much too church-directed, and therefore, he points out the necessary of the Church renewing its focus more towards the world-directed ministry.<sup>11</sup> This perspective on ministry is Coe's starting point for fleshing out his concept of contextualisation.

<sup>8</sup> William P. Russell, *Contextualization: Origins, Meaning and Implications-- A Study of What the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches Originally Understood by the Term "Contextualization", with Special Reference to the Period 1970-1972*, Ph.D. diss., Apud Pontificiam University S. Thomae in Urbe, 1995, 414.

<sup>9</sup> C.H. Huang (other name for Shoki Coe), *A Rethinking of Theological Training for the Ministry in the Younger Churches Today*, TEF Archives Box 20, File: 'TEF Publication: A Rethinking of Theo. Trang. For the Ministry in the Young. Chs. Today/ C. H. Huang', 5, quoted from Ibid., 370.

<sup>10</sup> C.H. Huang (other name for Shoki Coe), *A Rethinking of Theological Training for the Ministry in the Younger Churches Today*, TEF Archives Box 20, File: 'TEF Publication: A Rethinking of Theo. Trang. For the Ministry in the Young. Chs. Today/ C. H. Huang', 6, quoted from Ibid., 374.

<sup>11</sup> C.H. Huang (other name for Shoki Coe), *A Rethinking of Theological Training for the Ministry in the Younger Churches Today*, TEF Archives Box 20, File: 'TEF Publication: A Rethinking of Theo. Trang. For the Ministry in the Young. Chs. Today/ C. H. Huang', 27, quoted from Ibid., 381.

### Doing Theology through Examining the Context

Coe is further concerned with the condition of the Church, in 'A Rethinking of Theological Training for the Ministry in the Younger Churches Today,' he recounts that the real situation of the Church is always in a tension between the pressures 'from above,' by which he means the calling and gifts from the 'Servant Lord,'<sup>12</sup> and those 'from below,' by which he means the real circumstances in which the Church lives.<sup>13</sup> These two pressures continually interact and affect each other. In order to know and to perceive her gift and calling aright, the Church must examine the needs of the situation and its circumstances. Coe contends that this new way of doing theology must involve the Church both in what is changing in this world and with 'that givenness from above.'<sup>14</sup> Therefore theology cannot just be the mere repetition of a faith tradition, but must consider the needs of the situation.

### Doing Theology in Asian Context

While holding the above two convictions, Coe observes the rapid social and technological changes that have shaped Asian countries in the second half of the twentieth century. In order to meet the needs of Asian people in their rapidly developing situation, the Church had to approach their ministries and theologies in a way best fitting the Asian context, and had to develop diversified ministries to meet these situations. Furthermore, the radically different Asian context revealed the need for Asian churches to establish unique theologies of their own. He points out the problem that 'Newer Church, whether in theological education or church ministries, always copied Western Church,'<sup>15</sup> and claims that 'the model of the Church's ministry, which is established in the West, can not fit the needs of the context in the Asian and

<sup>12</sup> C.H. Huang (other name for Shoki Coe), *A Rethinking of Theological Training for the Ministry in the Younger Churches Today*, TEF Archives Box 20, File: 'TEF Publication: A Rethinking of Theo. Trang. For the Ministry in the Young. Chs. Today/ C. H. Huang', 11, 19, quoted from Ibid., 385.

<sup>13</sup> C.H. Huang (other name for Shoki Coe), *A Rethinking of Theological Training for the Ministry in the Younger Churches Today*, TEF Archives Box 20, File: 'TEF Publication: A Rethinking of Theo. Trang. For the Ministry in the Young. Chs. Today/ C. H. Huang', 14, quoted from Ibid., 386.

<sup>14</sup> C.H. Huang (other name for Shoki Coe), *A Rethinking of Theological Training for the Ministry in the Younger Churches Today*, TEF Archives Box 20, File: 'TEF Publication: A Rethinking of Theo. Trang. For the Ministry in the Young. Chs. Today/ C. H. Huang', 13-14, from Ibid., 390.

<sup>15</sup> See Chen Nangzhou, *Theology of Identification—Protestant Construction of Indigenous Theology in the Context of Taiwan* (認同的神學—基督新教在台灣實況中本土神學的建構), Logos (道), December 2001, no.5, 78. The original Chinese citation is: '後進教會,無論是神學教育或教會事工,總是在重複和模仿先進教會的方式.'



African Church.<sup>16</sup> In order to establish a theology suitable for an Asian context, Coe claims that Asian churches must dialogue with their domestic cultures and religions.<sup>17</sup>

### Conclusion

The above paragraphs have made a brief analysis of the thinking of Shoki Coe, when he served as the theological educator and church leader in PCT. At that time, he had already recognised that the development of the Church's ministry and theological education must examine the context to which it belongs so as to develop a ministry that fits the needs of domestic people. He also asserted that Asian churches must reject imported Western theology, in favour of the Asian churches' own theological model. To attain this, inter-religious dialogue with domestic social, cultural, and religious realities becomes a necessary task for churches in various regions of Asia.

### The Meaning of Contextualisation in 'Ministry in Context'

The 'Ministry in Context' is the first article that presented the concept of contextualisation and interpreted its meaning. Its contents include the introduction, five principles, and conclusion.<sup>18</sup> If, as William Russell affirms, Shoki Coe was the crucial figure in the publication of this article, it provides a bridge in understanding the ongoing development of Coe's thinking. While this paper does not intend to give a comprehensive presentation of the whole article, it will briefly highlight some features of contextualisation with reference to their significance in Taiwanese Christian-Buddhist dialogue.

### Doctrinal Foundation—the Incarnation of the Eternal Word

The introductory paragraph of 'Ministry in Context' presents the incarnation of Word as the starting point of contextualisation claiming that contextualisation is 'a theological necessity demanded by the incarnational nature of the Word.'<sup>19</sup> This

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Cited and translated from Chinese: '那建立於基督教化後又世俗化的西方社會的教會聖工, 對於已脫離殖民地時代的亞洲和非洲之現狀, 及對於在經過革命性變化的非基督教環境內為數寥寥無幾的基督教會, 究竟能發生妥當性與適合性.'

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> The original text of this document is in The TEF Staff, *Ministry in the Context: The Third Mandate Programme of the Theological Education Fund (1970-1977)*, New Life Press (of) The Theological Education Fund, Bromley, Kent, England, 1972. The text in this thesis is from William P. Russell, *Contextualization: Origins, Meaning and Implications: A Study of What the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches Originally Understood by the Term 'Contextualization', with Special Reference to the Period 1970-1972*, Ph.D. diss., Apud Pontificium University S. Thomae in Urbe, 1995, 34-35.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 34.



declaration claims that since the eternal Word, our Lord, has entered the limited human situation in a particular context, the Church has to follow his steps and relate the gospel to our own situations, and in such, the doctrine of incarnation provides a clear theological foundation of the Church' relation of its ministry to the particular context.

### **The Definition of 'Context'**

Principle 1 of the 'Ministry in Context' defines context as 'the process of the secularity, technology, and the struggle for human justice,'<sup>20</sup> and asserts that these features 'characterize the historical moment of nations in the Third World.'<sup>21</sup> The article claims that this definition does not deny indigenisation, which focuses on responding to traditional cultures of the Third World, but considers indigenisation as currently ill-fitting the situation of the Third World anymore. This statement shows that the meaning of context includes a blend of traditional culture and the contemporary situation, with an emphasis on the emerging situations of the Third World.

### **The Criteria of Authentic Contextualisation**

Principle 2 of the article attempts to define authentic contextualisation by listing its supporting criteria. These criteria include prophetic characteristics, the attempt to challenge and change the culture, and the genuine encounter between the Word and the world.<sup>22</sup> It is this encounter which deserves special mention here: It emphasises the importance of the realistic human situation while laying claims of being the guiding position of the Word. The article does not provide further interpretation about the meaning of the genuine encounter here, but only presents the importance of recognising that Scripture will do no good if read in a vacuum, without being properly anchored in the context. Additionally, it claims that the interpretation of the context must stem from the guidance of Scripture. It is obvious that this article attempts to keep the balance between Scripture's guiding role and the adaptation to the context.

### **The Dynamic Characteristic of Contextualisation**

These three features show that under the guidance of the eternal Word, contextualisation becomes strongly dynamic. Principle 4 of this article claims that

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 34-35.

contextual theology in the Third World would be the 'theology of change,' because the issues of theology are decided by Churches' responses to the situation in the specific, constantly changing context. The other spirit of contextual theology is its self-determination in regard to theological issues. Only people in that context can recognise their situation and decide which issues should be their theological focus.<sup>23</sup> The dynamic characteristics of contextualisation show that the content of theology and church ministry is different in each context and is perpetually changing in order to respond to their situational needs.

### Conclusion

Rooting contextualisation in the doctrinal foundation of the incarnation of the eternal Word, theology is moved to seek the genuine encounter of the eternal Word and the changing world effectively in order to respond to the Church's specific context. Asian churches must establish a theology fitting the demands of their specific contexts, with a special focus on the radical social, economic, and political changes in a post-colonial period. This concept affirms the necessity of the churches' self-perception and locally established theology. The above descriptions of the 'Ministry in context' show that Coe's convictions are consistent with those presented in the article of 1961 CE.

### The Implication of Coe's Thinking in Inter-religious Dialogue

As an Asian theological educator and church leader, Shoki Coe was aware that a complete transplantation of Western theology to the context of the Third World would be inappropriate. This theological conviction led him to propose a concept of contextualisation, citing the importance of Third World churches in examining their own contexts so as to develop the theologies and ministries that would best fit their needs. Therefore, in the 1961 article, he notes the importance of Asian churches entering into dialogue with the cultures and religions of their own contexts.<sup>24</sup> Coe's thinking provides the theoretical foundation for inter-religious dialogue in Asia, asserting how crucial it is, in order for Asian churches to root themselves in their own soil. Moreover, his thinking also points out an important goal for Christian dialogue with other faiths, being the understanding of the Church's context so that the Church

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Chen Nangzhou, *Theology of Identification—Protestant Construction of Indigenous Theology in the Context of Taiwan*, Logos, December 2001, no.5, 79.

can effectively serve its representative people.

### **C. S. Song's Asian Theology and Dialogue with Buddhism**

C. S. Song is recognised as one of the most important Asian theologians. The great achievement of his work is in establishing a theology within Asian cultures, and his work stands as an inspiration for many Asian theologians in forming a theology rooted in their own contexts. Song's early career was similar with that of Shoki Coe. In 1965 CE, Song succeeded Coe as the principal of the TTCS and, after a forced departure from Taiwan because of political persecution the TEF became his first ministry in the West. His Taiwanese background permitted his theology to greatly influence the PCT's contextual theology. Though remaining overseas for a long period of time, his theological work was not limited to Taiwan, but grew to establish Asian theology through dialogue with Asian cultures and religions. This section not only examines his thoughts on establishing an Asian theology through the encounters of Christianity with Asian cultures, but also explores his practical works on Christian dialogue with Asian religions, specifically with Buddhism. The brief analysis of his thinking about the interaction between Christian faith and Asian cultures, and his works on inter-religious dialogue, will comprise the first two parts of this section. The third part will be the assessment of his works and the application to Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan.

#### **Establishing Asian Theology in Asian Soils**

##### **Theological Premise—God Presents Himself in Asian History**

Song established his methodology of doing Asian theology on the premise that God has actively presented himself in Asian history. In his 'Theology from the Womb of Asia', Song declares that 'God has implanted in the lives of Asian peoples and in the histories of Asian countries,'<sup>25</sup> affirming the value of Asian cultures and religions by assuring that they contain the actions of God. Therefore, Song considers it necessary for the Christian faith to discern the presence of God in Asian contexts, especially in the focus of discerning the presence of God as the spirituality of Asian religions.<sup>26</sup>

##### **Establishing Theology with an Asian Identity**

<sup>25</sup> C. S. Song, *Theology from the Womb of Asia*, London: SCM Press LTD, 1988, 22.

<sup>26</sup> C. S. Song, *The Third-Eye Theology: Theology in Formation in Asian Settings*, Guildford and London: Lutterworth Press, 1972, 10.

As an Asian raised theologian, Song senses the necessity of Asian churches establishing their own theologies. He criticises traditional Asian theologies for their dependence on the Western theological traditions in supplying them with the tools for reflection and answers to Asian issues. This results in a transplanted theology, which does not consider the real needs of the Asia. He claims that Western theology, which starts from certain philosophical presuppositions and contains strong metaphysical characteristics, does not match the situation and needs of Asian society.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, Asian theology must liberate itself from Western theology in order to identify itself within Asian contexts.<sup>28</sup> To establish a theology suitable for the needs of Asian churches, Song draws attention the importance of discerning the Asian context.

### **Establishing Asian Theology through Encountering the Asian Context**

Holding the above conviction, Song devotes himself to the establishment of Asian theology through the encounters of the Christian faith in the Asian context. He interacts with different Asian cultures as his resources for his writings. Noting that Jesus spent more time in the marketplace than in the sanctuary, Song indicates that the primary sources of Asian theology are not limited to the Bible and Church tradition, but are also found within Asian cultures and religions.<sup>29</sup> He draws material from the stories of various Asian religious traditions, and then seeks to find their parallels within Christianity. Theologically, he pays great attention to the practical Asian socio-political context, and focuses on the struggle of Asian people against the sufferings of economic or political oppression. Furthermore, He claims that God's responses to these human situations should be the central issues of Asian theology.<sup>30</sup> His ideology can be summarised as examining the belief of traditional cultures, finding their parallels with Christian faith, and then relating them to the contemporary situation. This methodology shows the attempts to balance traditional cultures and the contemporary situation in his Asian contextual encounters.

### **The Implication of Song's Thinking for Inter-religious Dialogue**

Song's principles of doing Asian theology shows that he is mindful of the value of inter-religious dialogue. It is able to help Asian Christians comprehend God's presence

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<sup>27</sup> C. S. Song, *Jesus and the Reign of God*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993, x.

<sup>28</sup> C. S. Song, *Theology from the Womb of Asia*, London: SCM Press LTD, 1988, 3.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>30</sup> C. S. Song, *The Third-Eye Theology: Theology in Formation in Asian Settings*, Guildford and London: Lutterworth Press, 1972, 66-68.

in the lives of other Asian people and to acquire a deeper sense of God's actions and human spirituality, while also helping the Christian church to establish a theology rooted in Asian contexts.<sup>31</sup> Song emphasises the ethical dimension of the dialogue, as Asian cultures tend to be more ethical and pragmatic. He argues that the vision of inter-religious dialogue should be found human concerns, which include peace, justice, and a common humanity. He believes that, through this ethicality, people from different religions can unite in action, rather than participating in meaningless discussion, which often leads to division.<sup>32</sup> This vision contends that both Asian theology and inter-religious dialogue should interact with the ethical and practical characteristics of Asian cultures.

#### Song's Dialogue with Asian Religions—Buddhism as an Example

Song not only points out the importance of Christian dialogue with Asian religions, but he puts this conviction into practice in constructing his own theology. Numerous examples relate encounters between Christianity and Asian contexts, and since Buddhism is one of the most important religions in Asia, it has become the main subject in Song's work in inter-religious dialogue. The following paragraphs will examine his work on the dialogue with Buddhism so as to seek a possible model that he may provide for Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan.

#### Some Features in His Methodology

Some features of the methodology of Song's encounter with Buddhism should be indicated here. Firstly, Kenneth Fleming asserts that Song 'comes across more as a commentator on the vast sociological and religious realities of Asia than as one intimately involved with their contextual realities.'<sup>33</sup> Song's writings are mainly his interpretation of Buddhist literary sources, rarely mentioning the experiences of his personal encounters with Buddhists. Secondly, the main literary sources Song adopts are those of Mahāyāna Buddhism, including the two most popular schools, Chan and Pure Land. This means that the context of his encounter with Buddhism is mainly Eastern Asian, where Mahāyāna Buddhism is most widespread. The sources he examines the most are from Japanese Buddhism and traditional Chinese Buddhism

<sup>31</sup> C. S. Song, *Theology from the Womb of Asia*, London: SCM Press LTD, 1988, 16.

<sup>32</sup> C. S. Song, *The Believing Heart: An Invitation to Story Theology*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999, 6-7.

<sup>33</sup> Kenneth Fleming, *Asian Christian Theologians in Dialogue with Buddhism: A Study of the Writings of Kosuke Koyama, Choan-Seng Song, and Aloysius Pieris*, Ph.D. diss., The University of Edinburgh, 2000, 219.

with scant mention of the writings of contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism. So, even though Song is natively Taiwanese, contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism is not the main Buddhist subject of his dialogue. The reason for this absence is most likely due to his departure from Taiwan prior to the revival of modern Taiwanese Buddhism.

### **The Central Theme of Christian-Buddhist Dialogue**

Besides his methodology, there are some other features that are unique in his dialogue with Buddhism. Although Song acknowledges the differences between Christian and Buddhist faiths and reaffirms the necessity of respecting these differences he pays greater attention to the corresponding beliefs in the two religions. He states that at the centre of these correspondences is the theme of love/compassion, which he considers the heart of both religions.<sup>34</sup> He uses two examples to prove this parallel: The first is the parallel lives of the two central religious figures, Buddha and Jesus. Each presents a model of compassion/love in their mission of relieving human suffering. Song highlights the examples of Buddha's advocacy in eliminating the Hindu caste system and Jesus' removing traditional religious boundaries in order to become more inclusive and caring.<sup>35</sup> The second example is the representative symbols of the two religions. In his 'Third-Eye Theology,' Song indicates that the Christian Cross and the Buddhist Lotus, recognised symbols of each religion, point to the same crucial quest of human life—deliverance.<sup>36</sup> He claims that 'the cross is the supreme symbol of God's suffering love' and the lotus 'stills the troubled mind and gives assurance that suffering is not the last word.'<sup>37</sup> While comparing the motif of compassion/love, Song expresses his concern for the suffering and oppressed.

### **Dialogue with Two *Mahāyāna* Schools**

Besides the common central issue of the compassion/love, the materials of the two main Mahāyāna Buddhist Schools, Chan and Pure Land, are the main resources of Song's dialogue with Buddhism. In the dialogue with Pure Land, Song compares Shin Buddhism, the main sect of the Japanese Pure Land School, with the faith of Paul and Luther, and considers the belief of this School to embrace the Christian ideas of grace,

<sup>34</sup> C. S. Song, *The Third-Eye Theology: Theology in Formation in Asian Settings*, Guildford and London: Lutterworth Press, 1972, 53-77.

<sup>35</sup> C. S. Song, *Jesus, The Crucified People*, New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1990, 89.

<sup>36</sup> C. S. Song, *Third-Eye Theology: Theology in Formation in Asian Settings*, Guildford and London: Lutterworth Press, 1980, 102.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.



faith, and love.<sup>38</sup> In his dialogue with the Chan School, Song claims that the profound insights of Chan stories and symbols can help Christians to acquire a deeper understanding of Jesus' teachings and the Christian faith. For example, in 'The Believing Heart', he uses Chan's 'The Ten Cow-Herding Pictures' to assert that the way to obtain enlightenment/salvation is not through asceticism but through affirming people and the world, resulting in the claim that real spirituality is derived from actively involve oneself in this world.<sup>39</sup> He also uses the Chan concept of space to maintain that authentic salvation starts from a change of heart.<sup>40</sup>

#### Assessment of Song's Dialogue with Buddhism

The purpose of Song's dialogue with Buddhism is to develop a theology rooted in the Asian context. He seeks to do this by using Buddhist resources as tools to help Christians deepen their theological understanding and to express Christian messages in indigenous forms. In looking at the Asian theological establishment, Song's writings show that this approach is successful and garners support from other Asian theologians.

Furthermore, he presents a multi-step model of Christian-Buddhist dialogue by first examining Buddhist faith through the literary materials like the Buddhist sutras, Chan stories, and contemporary Buddhist writings, and then drawing on the elements of Buddhist beliefs, which are considered parallel with or helpful to the comprehension of Christian faith. Next, a summary of the common humanity and spirituality from the beliefs of the two religions is applied to the contemporary human situation. It should be mentioned that the above analysis deals with a conceptual model, and it is yet unclear whether Song practically follows it.

There are some problems in Song's dialogue with Buddhism. Firstly, since Song identifies himself as an Asian theologian, his writings show that he attempts to dialogue with the whole Asian situation. This intention faces a problem in that Asian cultures and contexts are vast and various. The attempt to cover the whole of Asian culture with general issues is difficult. A contradiction arises in his claims on the importance of self-reflection, when examining the situation of particular contexts. His attempts to depict the general Asian situation make his work on dialogue unable to authentically validate the real situation of these contexts.

<sup>38</sup> C. S. Song, *The Believing Heart: An Invitation to Story Theology*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999, 248-9.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 20-22.

<sup>40</sup> C. S. Song, *Theology from the Womb of Asia*, London: SCM Press LTD, 1988, 201-202.

Besides, in his work of dialogue with Buddhism, his use of Buddhist materials is fragmentary, lacking on account of the whole structure of Buddhist belief. The Buddhist materials he adopts seem to be selected according to the theological issues he wishes to deal with, and therefore, only play the role of supporting his theological purposes. This tendency is displayed by the critique that his use of Buddhist resources sometimes disregards Buddhists' own interpretation of these resources.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, in order to meet his theological objectives, he tends to utilise certain materials which serve his theological purposes, while ignores other themes important in Buddhist traditions. One example indicated by Kenneth Fleming is that Buddhist compassion was highlighted by Song because of its parallel with love in the Christian faith, but the doctrines of wisdom considered to be central to Buddhism, is simultaneously ignored.<sup>42</sup>

The above assessment shows that Song makes a contribution in elevating the importance of dialogue with Buddhism in establishing Asian theology, and he puts his conviction of inter-religious dialogue into practice. However, as Asian contexts are vast and due to his long absence from Asia, his attempt to deal with Asian theology through the whole Asian context becomes too heavy a burden. This limits his works of dialogue with Buddhism from practically reflecting the real situation of particular contexts, and in this, his theology does not reflect the practical Taiwanese context either. This aside, his dialogue with Buddhism is centered mainly in literary works and lacks any real engagement with Asian Buddhism at a grassroots level.

### **The Implication of Coe and Song's Thinking for Christian-Buddhist Dialogue**

The thinking of these two Taiwanese theologians provides inspiration for Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan. They both assert the necessity of developing a theology rooted in the context of Taiwan. In holding this conviction, Coe provides the concept of contextualisation, in which he gives more weight the contemporary situation without denying that traditional culture is also a part of that context. Song's works show that he seeks the establishment of an Asian theology, which relates to both traditional culture and contemporary contexts. Coe and Song both claim that Christian dialogue with domestic religions is essential for Taiwanese churches in contextualising Christianity. Additionally, Coe and Song express that rather than

<sup>41</sup> Kenneth Fleming, *Asian Christian Theologians in Dialogue with Buddhism: A Study of the Writings of Kosuke Koyama, Choan-Seng Song, and Aloysius Pieris*, Ph.D. diss., The University of Edinburgh, 2000, 221-222.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 222.

Western theology, which is metaphysically based, Christian faith in Taiwan should displays more practical and ethical characteristics. It is this pragmatism that are essential for Christianity to exist in the soil of Taiwan. Because inter-religious dialogue is closely tied to the establishment of an Asian theology, Coe and Song's thinking presents the necessity of developing a model of inter-religious dialogue that fits the context of Taiwan and its characteristics.

However, both Coe and Song's thinking contain important shortcomings in their application. Although Coe and Song express the importance of Christian dialogue with Taiwanese religions, they did not have practical experiences in their inter-religious dialogue specifically pertaining to the Taiwanese context. The writings of and about Coe show that he did not practically participate in inter-religious dialogue. One possible reason was that inter-religious dialogue was not the main focus of his ministry. Furthermore, in his definition of the meaning of context, he focuses more on contemporary situations than those of traditional cultures. Therefore, he paid more attention to the political movements of the PCT than to inter-religious dialogue. Even though he was living outside Taiwan, he became the main figure promoting the overseas Taiwanese self-determination movement.<sup>43</sup> Another possible reason is that he left Taiwan in 1965 CE, unable to return until 1987 CE. He had no opportunity to become involved in direct encounters with Taiwanese religions, Song does his work on Christian dialogue with Asian religions and through these he establishes his Asian theology, but in its generalness he lacks a direct dialogue with Taiwanese Buddhism and religions.

This lack of direct Taiwanese experience of inter-religious dialogue makes these two theologians unable to provide practical model of inter-religious dialogue for the Christian churches in Taiwan. The development of this model therefore awaits further development. However, Coe and Song still confirm that in order to develop a model of inter-religious dialogue, matching the context in Taiwan, two aspects must to be seriously considered. The first of which identifies the common cultural characteristics in Taiwanese people and between the followers of the two religions. The second consideration concerns Taiwan's process of democratization, in which there is a reconstruction of the social order and value system, presenting new issues that Taiwanese society and religions have to face. Some factual considerations of the

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<sup>43</sup> In the dedication of *Self-Determination—The Case for Taiwan*, C. S. Song calls Coe the guiding spirit of the Taiwan Self-Determination Movement. See C. S. Song, ed., *Self-Determination—The Case for Taiwan*, Tainan, Taiwan: Taiwan Church Press, 1998, dedication.

second aspect have been briefly described in Chapter One and will be dealt with in Chapter Seven. The first issue will be the main concern of the latter half of this chapter.

### **Discovering Common Cultural Characteristic in Confucianism**

Chapter One made mention that most Taiwanese residents are Han Chinese descent, and they still maintain a strong Chinese cultural heritage. If seeking a model of inter-religious dialogue based on domestic Taiwanese culture is necessary, it is important to find the common cultural characteristics in Taiwanese society. It is also important to discern whether these commonalities could function as a launch point for inter-religious dialogue in Taiwan. The main composition of Taiwanese society shows the most fertile common ground is Confucianism (儒家).

Since the Han Dynasty (漢朝, 206 BCE—220CE), Confucianism has long been the mainstay value system of Chinese society. Although there were anti-Confucian movements arising in China and Taiwan during the twentieth century, the influence of Confucianism has permeated every part of these societies. It is thus impossible for Taiwan to seek a clear separation from Chinese culture and deny the influence of Confucianism.

This section will explore the historical setting and the basic beliefs of Confucianism, allowing a special focus upon the thinking of Confucius (孔子, 552-479 BCE). In examining his thinking, there arises several humanistic elements inherent in Confucianism, which can be assigned as the common characteristics of Chinese culture. Facing the reality that institutional Confucianism has declined and its relevance questioned, the second part of this section will confirm the influence of Confucianism by presenting its prominent place in Chinese history and showing how its humanistic characteristics have permeated other Taiwanese religions.

### **Confucianism—A Humanistic Ethical Belief**

#### **The Historical Setting of Confucianism**

Confucian scholars maintain that Confucius himself played a crucial role in the establishment of his religion, and thus a good starting point for understanding the beliefs of Confucianism is Confucius' thinking. The format of Confucius' thinking is closely related to two features of the historical setting of his age being the Chou Dynasty (周朝, 1122-249 BCE).<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Chinese history usually divides the Chou Dynasty into West Chou (西周, 1122-722 BCE) and East Chou (東周, 722-249 BCE), which is also divided by the Spring-Autumn period (春秋, 722-481BCE)

### The Transformation of Religious Concept in the Chou Dynasty

Religious concept in the Chou Dynasty underwent a transformation influenced by the later development of religions and philosophies in China. Julia Ching defines Chinese religion before the Chou Dynasty as ecstatic religion, with widespread shamanism, which included mystic practices such as divination and ritual sacrifices.<sup>45</sup> During this period, the bond between humans and transcendent beings was assured by communication through mystic rites and practices. However, in the Chou Dynasty, the concept of deities had changed to the conviction of 'the supreme Heaven, a personal deity, who cared for people on earth and rewarded and punished them not capricious but according to the rational morality of their behavior.'<sup>46</sup> This transformation led the humanistic and ethical characteristics of Chinese religions to assume a more prominent place. This does not mean that the mystical elements of ancient Chinese religions had disappeared. On the contrary, they still continued to exist into popular religions today. However, 'the sense that human autonomy and rationality associated human destiny, fortune, and misfortunes with the activities of being themselves rather than with authority of the ghost and spirits,' had risen through this transformation.<sup>47</sup> It is this thinking on which Confucius based his humanistic concepts.

### The Social Chaos in East Chou

The period of Confucius was also a period when China was experienced total social chaos. The ancient period before East Chou, the Three Ages (三代),<sup>48</sup> was commonly considered the Golden Age in China. Many depictions about this period in ancient Chinese texts, might be considered by modern Chinese scholars to be an expectation of an ideal world.<sup>49</sup> However, it is affirmed that in West Chou, China existed as unified, highly agricultural, and civilised society. Duke Chou (周公), the third leader of the Chou Dynasty, worked to establish many social, economical, and

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and the Warring States period (戰國, 403-221BCE). Chou was divided into two periods not only because of the moving of the capital but also because the change of the political situation. In West Chou, the King held the absolute power in ruling the country. In East Chou, the feudal system replaced the power of the King and caused chaos in whole country.

<sup>45</sup> Hans Küng and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions*, New York, New York: Doubleday, 1989, 3.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>48</sup> The Three Ages is composed of three ancient dynasties, Hsia (夏), Shang (商), and West Chou (西周). This period also includes the period of sage kings before these three dynasties.

<sup>49</sup> Wei Zhengtong (韋政通), *Confucianism and Modern China (儒家與現代中國)*, Shanghai, China: People Publishing (中國上海:人民出版社), 1990, 1-4.



cultural advances. In general, the society at that period was highly civilised and people lived peaceful and abundant lives.

However, the situation changed when King Ping (周平王), the last king of West Chou, relocated the capital to Eastern China in 722 BCE. The decline of the central government led to a power vacuum, leaving feudal rulers' scrambling for territories and power, bringing about battles between states. Civilisation, economies, and social structures were left in ruin. Morality declined and people lived under constant suffering and death threat. During this situation, numerous thinkers rose from to provide philosophical responses to help resolve the social and political chaos. This condition brought about what is now termed the philosophical 'Golden Ages' in Chinese history. Like other thinkers during this period, Confucius custom built a theory aimed at solving the social and political chaos.

### The Basic Concept of Confucius

It was in the above historical setting that Confucius developed his thinking. In this chaotic period, Confucius attempted to provide a philosophy to restore the social order and to eliminate people's suffering. This concern caused him to focus towards more practical situations rather than metaphysical concepts. The Analects (論語), which are the origin of Confucius' thinking, are mainly concerned with moral cultivation than with metaphysical thinking, though Confucius still provides an ontological foundation for his belief, asserting that the impersonal and universal principle of Ultimate Reality, whether named as Tien (天, heaven) or Dao (道, way or path), permeates through the whole universe and every realm of the human world. To solve the problem of contemporary chaos and to restore the glory of the Ancient golden age, people and society have to observe the principle of the Tien/Dao.

From the dimension of the individual, the principle of Dao exists in human inner virtue and external moral conducts. The basic essence of human inner virtue was summarised by Confucius as Ren (仁). According to the Chinese lexicon, Shuowen (說文解字), this word is composed of two parts, 人 (also pronounced ren), meaning person, and 二 (pronounced er), meaning two. This analysis indicates that Ren is always concerned with human relationships. Furthermore, in the Analects, Confucius explained the practical meaning of Ren through various other virtues such as 'filial and fraternal responsibility' (孝悌, Analects 1.2)<sup>50</sup> and 'love for others' (愛人, Analects

<sup>50</sup> The English translation is from Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr. trans., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, New York, New York: Ballantine Books, 1998, 71.



12.22).<sup>51</sup> Confucius believed that all inner virtues and external moral conducts can be derived from the original meaning of Ren, which motivates a person to live a life reflecting Dao. Besides, Ren can not be realised just in an individual but can only manifest itself through human relationships and social interactions.

Collectively, Confucius considered the principle of Dao to be manifested in the ideal society of the Three Ages. Ancient Chinese texts describe that, during that period, there were sage kings ruling the people,<sup>52</sup> and all the subjects acted responsibly in their roles and duties.<sup>53</sup> Contrary to the chaos in the Confucius' period, the society in the Three Ages was harmonious and well ordered, and people lived in happy and materially abundant lives. The recovery of this ideal society, which is a reflection of Dao and the goal of Confucius and his later scholars eagerly sought.

Seeking the restoration of the ideal society begs the question of how this restoration is achieved. Confucius maintained that this goal is attained by both individual and collective dimensions. From the individual dimension, Confucius held an optimistic perspective of human nature, in considering Ren already existing in human nature. This perspective was later expanded by Mencius (孟子), Confucius' main successor, in the theory of 'the goodness in human nature' (性善說). Holding this optimism, Confucianism affirms the possibility of human beings achieving the transformation of individuals through self-cultivation. Through individual transformation, the society can then be transformed and attain the condition of the ideal world.

Confucius asserted that the best path to human self-cultivation is that of 'learning.' For him, 'having studied, to then repeatedly apply what you have learned' is not only 'a source of pleasure,' (Analects 1.1)<sup>54</sup> but also a source of individual transformation. He indicated that a person should learn six arts (rites, music, archery, driving of chariot, texts, and mathematics),<sup>55</sup> but the final goal of learning is to become a moral and civilised person. This is why Confucius devoted himself to education and has been revered as the greatest teacher in China, and also resulted in the Confucian and Chinese emphasis and the social value of education. The paths of self-cultivation were later developed by Confucian thinkers. For example, Mencius cites the

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>52</sup> The description about the examples of the sages king was in Analects: 1.12, 7.5, 8.18, 19, 9.5, 14.5, see Ibid., 74, 111, 124, 127, 172.

<sup>53</sup> This concept is from Analects 12:11, see Ibid., 156.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 71. The Chinese text is: '學而時習之,不亦悅乎.'

<sup>55</sup> The Chinese terms of these six arts are '禮, 樂, 射, 御, 書, 數.'

importance of recovering the lost nature through nurturing the 'great flaw of Chi' (浩然之氣). In the Sung Dynasty (宋朝, 860-1279 CE), the Neo-Confucian scholars integrated this practice with Buddhist and Daoist meditations. Although there are different ideas regarding the paths of self-cultivation, Confucianism lays great importance in obtaining personal transformation.

The collective dimension of attaining the ideal society is shown in Confucius' concept that 'The rulers must be rulers, the ministers ministers, the fathers fathers, and the sons sons.'<sup>56</sup> This concept expresses the importance of collectivism in Confucian thought. The value of the individual is directly related to his/her relationship with others in the collective community. In that, it is important for every person to fulfill his or her role and responsibility towards the goodness of the collective.

Confucius used Li (禮, the rites) to define both the relationships between people countered with the responsibility of individuals. In ancient Chinese society, the ecstatic religions used rites as a means of communication between human beings and the deities so as to acquire bliss. In the Chou Dynasty, Duke Chou expanded the rites to include every realm of human life and made them the defining criteria of appropriate relationships between people. In this spirit, Confucius expanded the meaning of Li to ritual propriety and used it as a definitive tool in the relationship between people and the community. The Analects mentions that 'Deference unmediated by observing ritual propriety is lethargy; caution unmediated by observing ritual propriety is rowdiness; candor unmediated by observing ritual propriety is rudeness (Analects 8.2).'<sup>57</sup> In observance of Li, the inter-personal relationships are properly defined and subsequently lead to harmony, and then resulting in a stabled society.<sup>58</sup> With this basic conviction, Li, the rites and the propriety behind these rites, was extended to the rules of proper human behaviour in Chinese society in the later period.

In presenting the claim that Confucianism was basically concerned with the restoration of the ideal society, one which existed in the ancient world and which contains the reflection of the principle of Ultimate Reality, Dao. To realize this ideal world, the individual has to cultivate his or her inner virtue, which is generised as Ren so that people can live a moral life and meet the requirements of Li, the norm of proper

<sup>56</sup> Analects 12:11, see Ibid., 156. The Chinese text is: '君君,臣臣,父父,子子'

<sup>57</sup> See Ibid., 120. The Chinese texts is: '恭而無禮則勞,慎而無禮則蕙,勇而無禮則亂.'

<sup>58</sup> In Analects 1.12, Confucius said, 'Achieving harmony is the most valuable function of observing the ritual propriety (Li)'. The Chinese text is: '禮之用,和爲貴,' see Ibid., 74.

manners in people's relationship with each other. By commonly observing the requirement of Li, a society can acquire harmony in people's inter-personal relationships and augments the stability and abundance of society.

### Humanistic Characteristics in Confucianism

Confucianism wholly displays strong humanistic characteristics, which can be summed up in three features, including the spirit of altruism, high moral attainment, and a concern for this world. All these three details demonstrates Confucianism's deeply felt humanism.

#### **Altruism**

Confucianism shows a strong caring spirit for the goodness and happiness of people in the society and by extension, the happiness of society as a whole. This spirit is evident in Confucius' claim of Ren being the central human virtue and his strong conviction of caring for the wellbeing of all people. In such, Confucius claims in the *Analects* that 'all men in the four seas are brothers' (*Analects* 12:5).<sup>59</sup> This awareness of altruism focuses more on individual responsibility to others than on the motivations of love or compassion. This is also shown Confucian identification of the close relationship between the wellbeing of the individual and that of the community. Since one's wellbeing is closely related to others in the community, it is important for individuals to care for the welfare of others, well ahead of the needs of the individual. This conviction becomes ideal image of Chinese intellectuals, in that, Confucius emphasised the responsibility of the elite rulers in attaining a consciousness of altruism leading them to a devotion to the wellbeing of the society. However, the love and responsibility of Confucian believers assume different priorities respective to social levels. Confucianism claims that the right attitude and actions of altruism should be 'Being intimate to relatives, being benevolent to all people, and loving all animals and plants.' The above principle shows why family is the primary focus in Chinese society, and is also why the Chinese are often criticised for its exclusive focus on family, generating the neglect of public affairs in the present day. This concept holds that the ideal Chinese image is one of compassion for the wellbeing of other and communal interests.

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<sup>59</sup> The English translation is from Hans Küng and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions*, New York, New York: Doubleday, 1989, 69. The Chinese text is: '四海之內皆兄弟.'

### Moral Attainment

Confucianism's anti-egoistic tendencies are also displayed in the conviction that morality is a Confucian central value. This conviction is first presented in the Confucian claim that inner virtue and proper moral conduct are the best reflections of the Dao. Therefore, morality is the criterion in judging the value of a person and their society. This conviction is evident in Confucius' belief that the self-cultivation of virtues and moral conduct are the main path for individual fulfillment of an ideal personality and for the community to restore its condition to that of ancient ideal society. Throughout Chinese history the main value system in Chinese culture pay more attention towards greater moral attainment than to the practical capability in improving human lives. The best way for a king or emperor to rule a country is by leading a moral example for the commoners to follow. In addition, the civil service examination in China moral cultivation rather than ruling capability becaomes the criterion of choosing people to be the government's officers resulting in Chinese culture that has high expectations and standards of moral attainment. However, it is this tendency of adhering to moral attainment while ignoring the administrative capability, which is criticised by modern Chinese scholars as the core reason why China could not keep up with the developing paths of modernity while facing the challenges of its complicated situation after the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>60</sup>

### Concern for This World

Confucianism is not without a strong sense of this-worldly concern, while keeping other-worldly expectations in a marginal position. In the Analects, when Confucius' disciples asked him about ghosts, deities, and death, he responds 'Not able to serve other people, how would you be able to serve the spirits?' and 'Not yet understanding life, how could you understand death.' (Analects 11.12)<sup>61</sup> These answers clearly express his attitude towards mystic and other-worldly affairs. Confucian concern for this world is best displayed in its central goals of seeking individual self-transformation and the restoration to an ideal society modeled after the

<sup>60</sup> Parng Pwu (龐樸), *The Humanistic Spirit of Chinese Culture (中國文化的人文主義精神)* in the *Reconsideration of Chinese Culture, VI, The Characteristics of Chinese Traditional Culture (中國傳統文化的再檢討, 上編, 中國傳統文化的特徵)*, The Department of History, Fudang University ed. (上海復旦大學歷史系編), Hong Kong: Shangwu Publishing (香港:商務印書館), 1987, 59.

<sup>61</sup> The English translation is from Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr. trans., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, New York, New York: Ballantine Books, 1998, 144. The original Chinese texts are: '未能事人,焉能事鬼' and '未知生,焉知死.'

Golden Ages of ancient China rather than exploring mystic experiences and the search for other-worldly attainments. Such this-worldly concern influences Chinese people and religions as well. Chinese people strongly focus on the pragmatic function of religions instead of their other-worldly motives. This does not mean that Chinese religions have no aspects of achieving an other-worldly destiny. In fact, neither Buddhism, Daoism, nor folk beliefs lack the doctrines of an ultimate destiny. However, the tendency of Chinese this-worldly concern causes all Chinese religions to contain the functions of seeking human this-worldly wellbeing and expecting the fulfillment of a this-worldly ideal society.

### **A Humanistic Ethical Belief**

This Confucian humanism has become the mainstay value system in China, with the ethics affirming the value of social wellbeing and is concerned with human happiness. However, these humanistic characteristics are distinct from those of Western humanism, which are strongly individualistic. Confucianism claims that human value is established by both individual inter-personal relationships and collective ones. Standing out is the primary concern for the wellbeing of all human beings with a social emphasis on communal responsibility for the country as a whole. This human valuation is best judged through the criteria of morality, including inner virtue and ethical conduct. Therefore, self-cultivation, so as to express high moral attainment becomes the goal of individuals. This moral self-cultivation does not aim at attaining an other-worldly destiny, but rather pursues the goal of establishing an ideal society in this world.

### **Confucianism as the Mainline System of Chinese Culture**

After indicating three features of Confucian humanistic characteristic, this section will prove that these features have been the mainstay Chinese culture. This factual condition will on the one hand be verified through the historical fact that Confucianism has been the main value system in last 2000 years, and deeply influences the intellectuals. It is also evident that these beliefs permeate other Chinese and Taiwanese religions. Although institutional Confucianism has gradually declined and its relevance questioned in the twentieth century, it is undeniable that the above three characteristics are still deeply rooted in the daily life of Chinese and Taiwanese societies.



## Historical Evidences of Confucianism as the Mainline System in Chinese Culture

Spans of Chinese history give weight to Confucians prominence throughout the evolution of Chinese society. This is confirmed in the fact that these ethical features were already in place as the pillar of values before Confucianism. In the *Analects*, Confucius declares that ‘Following the proper way, I do not forge new path; with confidence I cherish the ancient.’(*Analects* 7.1),<sup>62</sup> showing that he considers himself as one who did not create Confucian thinking singlehandedly, but who succeeded and expanded upon ancient traditions. He is a self proclaimed lover of the ancient ways, and considered his thinking as originating from the examples of ancient sage kings under the conditions of an ancient ideal society. Although the real condition of these sage kings and ideal societies is not historically clear, the elements drawn upon by Confucius from these ancient examples must have existed in the Chinese cultural heritage

Although Confucius’ career was considered a failure in his times, Confucianism moved to the centre of Chinese culture in the Han dynasty and, since then, has maintained its orthodox position in the political, social, and cultural realms. Throughout his life, Confucius strove to restore the country to its idealised state by urging feudal rulers to accept his theory and even obtaining political office to actualise his beliefs. However, he was always rejected by these rulers, and the sole achievement of his career was in educating his disciples who later developed his theory and works.

The place of Confucianism changed in the Han Dynasty. The Emperor Wu (漢武帝) was persuaded by an officer, Dong Zhongshu (董仲舒) to advocate Confucianism as state orthodoxy in the first century BCE. Ever since then, Confucianism became the commonly held belief of Chinese intellectuals. Confucian texts were made into instruction manual for training government officials. The government set up an academic institute to promote Confucian thinking, and Confucian writings became the main texts in schools and the main subjects of the ‘Chinese Civil Service Examination (科舉考試)’ until 1905 CE. Therefore, the elite and ruling classes in China were cultivated mainly in Confucian thought. Furthermore, sacrifices to heaven and to Confucius became annual state rites from the Han Dynasty onward, turning Confucianism into a state religion. The educational, political, and ritual system caused Confucianism to rise to the centerpiece of Chinese culture. Its beliefs gradually

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<sup>62</sup> The English translation is from Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr. trans., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, New York, New York: Ballantine Books, 1998, 111. The Chinese text is: ‘述而不作,信而好古,竊比於我老彭.’



influenced every part of Chinese society saturating deep into the consciousness of Chinese people.

### The Humanistic Characteristics in Other Chinese Beliefs

These humanistic characteristics derived from Confucianism also influenced other Chinese beliefs. Confucianism might not represent the entire Chinese culture, for this cultural system is complicated and varies in different eras and areas, and there are other religions, which contain beliefs different from Confucianism. However, it is also true that the above three humanistic features actually permeated throughout every part of the Chinese culture and can be found in other Chinese religions. This fact shows that these characteristics are not only the main elements of Confucian belief, but also became the common characteristics of Chinese belief.

### **This-Worldly Tendency in Daoism and Folk Beliefs**

Traditional Daoist belief is strongly renunciatory and focuses on seeking individual liberation rather than social reformation. The ultimate Daoist goal is to seek the ideal image of the person, 'the True Man' (真人)--a person completely liberated from the bondage of the empirical world. This destiny is to be attained in this world rather than in an other-worldly sphere. This element of this-worldly concern is also evident in the pragmatic characteristics of Chinese folk beliefs. Chapter One has indicated that it is not easy to distinguish Daoist religion and folk beliefs in Taiwan. Not only do people of popular beliefs seek immediate benefit in their daily lives, but the expectation of a this-worldly ideal society became the foundation of numerous revolutionary movements of the popular classes in Chinese history. The revolutionary movements at the Chinese popular level, seeking the actualisation of an ideal world, also happened in Taiwanese society. The revolution of the Shilai Temple in the Japanese colonialist period caused the Japanese Government to tighten its control of Buddhism, because the leaders of the rebellion were misclassified as the leaders of the Vegetarian Sects. A study by the Taiwanese historian Wang Zhianchuan, proves that it was actually a rebellion started by folk believers, in which Daoist gods and mystic practices can be found in the records of their religious practices,<sup>63</sup> proving that elements of this-worldly concern are shared in Taiwanese Daoism and folk beliefs.

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<sup>63</sup> Wang Zhianchuan, *The Relationship of Shilai Rebellion with Daoism and Luan Hall* (西來庵事件與道教、鸞堂之關係) in *Religions and Cultures in Taiwan*, Wang Zhianchuan and Lee Shiwei, Luzhou, Taipei, Taiwan: Boy Young, 1999, 309-336.

### Moral Teachings in Daoism and Folk Beliefs

Because of the emphasis on moral attainment in Chinese culture, both Daoism and folk beliefs adopted Confucian ethical teachings as the source of their moral cultivation. Although at first the ultimate Daoist attainment was in seeking individual liberation from the bondage of civilisation, later Daoist thinkers, such as Zhang Ru (張魯), Ge Hong (葛洪), and Kow Qianzhi (寇謙之), all claimed the importance of virtues such as Ren, Xiao (孝, filial piety), and Yi (義, appropriateness in social behaviour),<sup>64</sup> which were directly derived from Confucianism.<sup>65</sup> Confucian moral teachings also became the backbone of Daoist and folk beliefs in Taiwan; Luan hall, mentioned in Chapter One, showed characteristic of folk beliefs in its religious practices, with ritual divination practice through oracles coming from Confucianism. Taiwanese religious scholar Zheng Zhiming (鄭志明) indicates that many oracles exhibit the deities' concern for the wellbeing of the human beings.<sup>66</sup> Other oracles he lists claim that the reason for the chaos in society is the erosion of virtue and moral conduct,<sup>67</sup> showing the similarity with the teachings in Confucianism. This condition causes a disagreement between scholars over the precise identity of Luan hall. Li Shiwei considers it to be one of popular Confucianism, but Zheng Zhiming considers it a folk belief.<sup>68</sup> These examples show the importance of moral attainment in Daoism and in popular beliefs in Taiwan, and the influence of Confucian moral teachings upon them.

### The Self-adaptation of Chinese Buddhism

In order to be accepted by Chinese people, Buddhism adopted these Chinese humanistic characteristic as it spread in China. This fact is shown principally in the

<sup>64</sup> The English translations of these terms are according to Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr. trans., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, New York, New York: Ballantine Books, 1998.

<sup>65</sup> Mou Zhongjian (牟鐘鑑), *Daoism and Chinese Traditional Culture (道教與中國傳統文化)* in *Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Traditional Culture (儒、佛、道與傳統文化)*, Yu Jie ed. (余喆), Beijing, China: Chinese Books (中國北京:中華書局), 1996, 273.

<sup>66</sup> Zheng Zhiming (鄭志明), *How Taiwanese Folk Oracles Provide the Function of Moral Cultivation (台灣民間鸞書的神道設教)* in *Religion and Culture (宗教與文化)*, Zheng Zhiming ed., Taipei, Taiwan: Xuesheng Books (學生書局), 1990, 180.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>68</sup> Lee Shiwei, *Taiwanese Confucian Movements in the Period of Japanese Occupation*, in the *Religions and Cultures in Taiwan*, Wang Zhianchuan and Lee Shiwei, Luzhou, Taiwan: Boy Young, 1999, 156, and Zheng Zhiming, *How Taiwanese Folk Oracles Provide the Function of Moral Cultivation in Religion and Culture*, Zheng Zhiming ed., Taipei, Taiwan: Xuesheng Books, 1990, 178.

translation and spread of Buddhist scripture. In the beginning, both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism and their scriptures were introduced to China.<sup>69</sup> However, it was Mahāyāna that was most popularly accepted by the Chinese people and eventually became the prominent Buddhist tradition due to its beliefs which are parallel with the culture. In Chinese Buddhist history, several examples indicate that Buddhism was self-adoptive in fitting a above three Chinese characteristics. The belief of 'experiencing the state of Nirvāṇa in the present world,' which had originated from the early Mahāyāna in India, was popularly accepted by Chinese Buddhists and developed into a systematic belief. This shows that the this-worldly concern is easily accepted by the Chinese people. Moreover, as traditional Buddhism contains the tendency of renouncing this world and ignores social and ethical teachings. However, in order to fit the highly ethical requirements of China, Chinese Buddhists developed a Confucian based ethical teachings. For example, in Chinese Buddhism, filial piety was claimed to be the most important moral practice, one which has always been the most important virtue in Confucianism. In reflecting the elements of altruism, the Bodhisattva path and the beliefs of Amitābha and Kuanyin, who are two prominent symbols of compassion, were adopted as the most popular beliefs in Chinese Buddhism. The above three features of self-adaptation also appear in Taiwanese Buddhism. The most prominent example of Taiwanese Buddhist self-adaptation to Chinese culture, therefore acquiring a great success in its development, is the rise of 'Humanistic Buddhism' in the 1980s, which will be discussed in Chapter Five.

### **Conclusion: Common Characteristics of Chinese/Taiwanese Religions**

The above examples show that Chinese humanistic characteristics do not only originate from Confucianism but, as an intrinsic part of Chinese culture, have been deeply rooted in other Chinese and Taiwanese religions. This means that they not only belong to the heritage of Confucianism, but, as the common characteristics of Chinese culture, also become the common elements of Chinese and Taiwanese religions.

### **Response to the Decline of Confucianism in Modern China**

In the beginning of twentieth century, Western intrusion and the degeneration of China aroused the voices of anti-Confucianism, which viewed it as burdensome to the modernisation of China. This anti-Confucianism movement started from the Five Four

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<sup>69</sup> Gu Weikang (顧偉康), *Survey of the Syncretism of Chan and Pure Land* (禪淨合一流略), Taipei, Taiwan: Dong Dah Books plc (台灣台北: 東大圖書公司), 1997, 5-7.

New Cultural Movement (五四新文化運動) in 1919 CE. After the Communists set up their regime in China, this anti-Confucianism movement grew to a climax in the 1970s. In Taiwan, the KMT government advocated 'The Movement of Restoring Chinese Culture (復興中華文化運動),' which actually aimed to legitimise its regime by exalting Confucianism. However, when democratisation and indigenisation movements rose in Taiwan, Confucianism was expelled because its feudalistic ideas were considered to be inhibitors of democratisation and its identifying with Chinese culture was viewed as a threat to Taiwan's self-identity. These realities are shown in the fact that institutional Confucianism was expelled in both China and Taiwan, and raises the question of Confucianism's relevance in the lives of Chinese people and whether its characteristics can be adopted as the common ground of inter-religious dialogue.

However, this does not mean that the humanistic features expressed in Confucian beliefs had disappeared from Chinese culture. On the contrary, humanistic characteristics in Confucianism are still the main features of Chinese culture and are evident in the daily lives of Han descendents whether in China or Taiwan. This condition is undeniable and the attempts to remove Confucian humanistic characteristics from Taiwanese people and culture prove impossible. Besides, even if some elements of Confucianism became barriers of modernisation in China and Taiwan, this does not mean that the entire belief system is futile and should be completely abandoned. There are still advantages in Confucianism, which are helpful for the development of modern Taiwan. The economic success of countries in East Asia, including Taiwan itself, is considered to be due to the influence of Confucianism, providing proof of Confucian contribution to the modern world.<sup>70</sup> A more appropriate approach is to analyse the elements of Confucian belief and their relation to the contemporary situation so as to single out the positive elements and transform the negative.

#### Humanistic Characteristics—A Possible Foundation for Christian-Buddhist Dialogue

It is clear that the humanistic elements originating from Confucianism are the best representation of Chinese cultures. While seeking a common ground of Chinese culture in which to develop an indigenous Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan,

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<sup>70</sup> Hans Küng and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions*, New York, New York: Doubleday, 1989, 93-95.

these humanistic ethical characteristics, altruism, high moral attainment, and concern for this world, will become the foundation of inter-religious dialogue in Taiwan. They can also provide a focal point for inter-religious dialogue on ethical and this-worldly concerns.

### **Establishing a Christian-Buddhist Dialogue with Taiwanese Characteristics**

The first two sections of this chapter have proved that seeking the consexualisation of Christian faith and developing an indigenous inter-religious dialogue are important task for Taiwanese Christian churches. In addition, the ethical humanistic characteristics in Confucianism are the common ground for developing this contextual model. These two convictions lead to the following consideration of how they could be applied so as to fit the current Taiwanese context.

### **The Proper Purpose and Form of Inter-religious Dialogue in Taiwan**

#### **Multiple-purposes and Multiple-forms of Inter-religious Dialogue**

Since the twentieth century, the Christian Church in various traditions began to claim that inter-religious dialogue is an essential ministry for the Church and started to work on inter-religious dialogue in different areas, defining several purposes for the Christian dialogue with other religions. Firstly, they consider inter-religious dialogue as a constructive path in reducing previous tensions while rebuilding friendships between faiths. Second, inter-religious dialogue is a way to establish a global community to achieve the common humanity. Third, inter-religious dialogue is a way of enriching Christian understanding of humanity, the world, and truth. These different purposes are not mutually exclusive but show specific emphases in various contexts.

With various purposes, inter-religious dialogue can also be classified into different forms. The first is the dialogue of doctrines in which Christians and Buddhists seek to explain each other's beliefs so as to deepen their intellectual understanding of their respective religions. The second is the dialogue of spiritual experience, in which Christians and Buddhist attempt to communicate their experiences of accessing the ultimate reality and promoting human spirituality. The third is the dialogue of social action, in which Christians and Buddhists seek to share the ethical values of their respective religions, and explore the possibility of collaboration in common concern for the wellbeing of society and its people.

Theoretically, these multiple purposes and forms should proceed together and supplement one another. Practically, as the response of Buddhist representatives in the

WCC's Ajaltoun Memorandum make clear, 'the meaning, basis, and purpose of dialogue is related to particular contexts.'<sup>71</sup> There might be different starting points, forms, and purposes because of the differences in context and theological premises. Thus, when pursuing Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan, it is important to seek appropriate forms that can meet the current context.

### Seeking the Appropriate Form of Christian-Buddhist Dialogue in Taiwan

Among various forms of inter-religious dialogue, the humanistic and ethical characteristics of Chinese culture make it clear that the appropriate starting point for inter-religious dialogue in Taiwan should emphasise the dialogue of social action with a focus on the common concern evident in the three Confucian characteristics, altruism, high moral attainment, and concern for this world. This does not mean that the other two forms are not important or should be excluded from Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan, because all these forms and purposes are closely related to each other. But the primary concern should involve ethical and humanistic considerations in the current context. The following paragraphs will demonstrate through the thinking of two Taiwanese theologians and common humanistic characteristics of Chinese culture.

### **The Dialogue of Social Action Is Suitable for the Context of Taiwan**

#### The Pragmatic Characteristic of Taiwanese Religions

The dialogue of social action, with its ethical and humanistic dimension, fits the pragmatic characteristics of religions in Taiwan, as presented in the first chapter. Taiwanese religions tend to focus on the pragmatic religious approaches to human this-worldly needs rather than on the exploration of metaphysical concepts. This tendency is displayed either by seeking immediate solutions to human problems and desires, or in pursuing a religious destiny with a this-worldly goal. This religious tendency not only pertains well to the characteristics of Chinese culture but also indicates that this form of dialogue is a dialogue that is more easily accepted.

#### It Confirms with the Information of the Qualitative Research

The views of the two religious people on the other and on inter-religious dialogue expressed in Chapter Two and Three also agree with the direction suggested by the

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<sup>71</sup> S. J. Samartha ed., *Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1971, 29.



dialogue of social action. The qualitative research affirms that practical human wellbeing is a central concern in Christianity and Buddhism. This explains why, among the three forms of dialogue, social action was generally preferable to these interviewees. Besides, the factual situation recounted in Chapter Three shows that the dialogue of social action was the most frequent form encountered in past interactions, supporting the claim that the dialogue of social action will seem less alien to its participants.

#### **It Is Helpful in Eliminating the Barriers**

The dialogue of social action can help diminish the current barriers to the Christian-Buddhist dialogue. Chapter Three indicates that currently the two greatest barriers of Christian-Buddhist dialogue are the exclusive tendency and the discrepancies between doctrines. These barriers belong to the conceptual level and bear upon ideas about human ultimate destiny. The qualitative research shows that it is unlikely to expect these barriers to be eliminated in the near future. This is displayed in the interviewees expressing their insistence of the uniqueness of their religions in their soteriology and in their hesitation to become involved in the dialogue of doctrine and spiritual experience. Nevertheless, if the focus is on the dialogue of social action, Christian-Buddhist dialogue presents a more promising future.

Chapter Three also indicated that, although the doctrinal discrepancies between the religions are hard to resolve, the parallels in the ethical sphere of the two religions are quite obvious. If the focus of inter-religious dialogue in Taiwan is moved in an ethical and humanistic direction, the barrier of exclusivism and doctrinal discrepancies will be easier to reduce and a willingness to participate in the dialogue will be strengthened. Therefore, starting from the dialogue of social concern is a way of temporarily setting aside the barriers and embarking on a more conducive path.

#### **Building an Ethical Dialogue through the Model of C. S. Song and Lynn de Silva** A Framework which Moves from Conceptual to Ethical

Shifting the focus of inter-religious dialogue to an ethical focus does not mean that the dialogue of doctrine and spiritual experience will be completely excluded. Claiming that the dialogue of social action is to be the centre of inter-religious dialogue means that ethical issues would be the primary concern, but the dialogue of social action must still be built on a foundation of doctrine. After establishing the principle that the dialogue of social action should be the focus of Christian-Buddhist

dialogue in Taiwan, the next task would be to seek a proper model for the dialogue, one centrally placing a shared humanistic ethical concern to be common in the ideology of the two religions.

### The Model in Song's Works

C. S. Song provides a model in his dialogue with Buddhism, which first examines the beliefs of the two religions and find the parallels in their faiths. Next, a comparison between these parallel concepts will yield clues on how both faiths can enrich each other. Lastly, is the application of these common understandings of faith into the contemporary context. Apart from Song's model, the Sri Lanka theologian Lynn de Silva provides a similar and more comprehensive model of inter-religious dialogue in his 'The Problem of Self in Buddhism and Christianity.'

### The Model of Lynn de Silva

As a Methodist theologian who dwells in a Buddhist dominated country, de Silva holds the perspective that 'theological thinking in order to be meaningful and relevant must be contextual.'<sup>72</sup> He also believes that inter-religious dialogue 'can fertilise and enrich Christian's own faith.'<sup>73</sup> His theological career is thus devoted to Christian-Buddhist dialogue in his Sri Lankan context.

In 'The Problem of Self in Buddhism and Christianity,' de Silva analyses the concept of man in both religions and demonstrates that their concepts are not directly contrary to each other. In fact, Buddhist doctrines of *anattā* and the Christian understanding of selfhood from the aspect of *pneuma* are distinctly parallel to each other. They both agree that 'there is no distinguishable, immortal soul existing.'<sup>74</sup> They both deny the false concept of self, which establishes its existence and value completely apart from other people and from social contexts, but they affirm that the value of an authentic self consists in the mutuality of personal relationships.<sup>75</sup> Each of their concepts can enrich and deepen the other. For instance, de Silva claims that the 'Buddhist concept of rejection of an immortal soul within man'<sup>76</sup> helps Christians to correct this popular but wrong concept in Christian traditions. Christian interpretation of the concept of *pneuma* from a social dimension can help Buddhists overcome the

<sup>72</sup> Lynn A. de Silva, *The Problem of the Self in Buddhism and Christianity*, London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1975, xiii.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., xii

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 6.

danger of isolative individualism.<sup>77</sup>

Establishing this common doctrinal ground, de Silva claims that both religions affirm the necessity of individual participation in the communion of personal encounter and in the ethical dimension of people's devotion to the community. De Silva also indicates that the concept of 'man' in the two religions not only hold common doctrinal ground but also provide the possibility for common ethical actions. In the final chapter of his book, through this common doctrinal concept of 'man', de Silva provides practical, socially relevant ethics in urging both religions to establish a community in Sri Lanka.<sup>78</sup>

It is not the purpose of this thesis to detail how de Silva seeks to encourage Christian-Buddhist dialogue through their shared beliefs about 'man' or to evaluate whether he gives an appropriate interpretation of this concept in the two religions. It is rather to claim that his study on the concept of man in Christianity and Buddhism concepts provide a model of dialogue, similar to Song's, in examining parallel doctrines in each belief system, grounding the similarities and discovering how their specific concepts can enrich and deepen the other, and applying the practical relevance of these common concepts into social action.

#### The Implications of Song and de Silva's Model

As literary sources, Song and de Silva end-up participating in a one-sided dialogue, because their dialogue happen only in the interpretation of one side rather than the real dialogue between people in two religions, though de Silva claims that his writings have been examined by some Buddhist scholars before publication. Both Song and de Silva point to the direction of common social actions, but literary writings are not the same as real actions. Moreover, in their writings, they emphasise the parallels in the two religions without mentioning the lingering vast discrepancies. Their works still make contributions in providing at least a model of inter-religious dialogue that can establish a framework on the conceptual level, which contains the prospectus of leading to social action. This model properly meets the needs of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in the current context of Taiwan, especially while two religions' seeking a dialogue emphasising social action based on Chinese ethics.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 146-159.

### Conclusion

This chapter has outlined an approach to Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan that is contextual in the double sense of finding its departure points in the contextual theologies of Taiwan's two most prominent Christian theologians, and in the common ground of Confucian humanistic ethical values of altruism, high moral attainment, and concern for this world. It can be concluded, therefore, that a contextual Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan should be a dialogue with a strong ethical and humanistic dimension.

Secondly, the analysis offered in this chapter makes clear that Taiwanese Christians and Buddhists do not encounter each other in a simple bilateral relationship, as it were, 'face to face.' Their contextual situation in Taiwanese society means that each religion encounters the other in a cultural arena that has been historically infused with Confucian values. To the degree in which this is true, they encounter each other in a dynamic relationship with a third motivator that is not external to either, but inherently informs their self-understanding as Taiwanese Christians and Buddhists. This creates a significant contextual possibility, while each religious community affirms its separate identity in terms of belief systems and institutional structures, their shared cultural identity as Taiwanese allows them to share a common ground of humanistic values derived from centuries of Confucian influence, creating a contextual environment in which Christians and Buddhists have the possibility of developing an approach to inter-religious dialogue that, on the one hand, respects ideological differences without allowing these to become forces of mutual isolation, and, on the other, allows for a pragmatic dialogue that avoids the dangers of careless syncretism.

This chapter therefore confirms the fourth hypothesis of this thesis, that a Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan should root itself in the ethical foundations of Confucianism in the dimensions of altruism, moral attainment, and concern for this world. This creates the situation in which Taiwanese Christians and Buddhists can engage authentically as Christians and Buddhists, and contextually as Christians and Buddhist who share a Confucian legacy of religious humanism. This approach to dialogue invites each community to bring its social values to bear on shared challenges in Taiwanese society. This is in accord with the findings of the qualitative research into attitudes towards inter-religious dialogue that currently prevail in the Christian and Buddhist communities, and agreeing with the theological views advanced in Taiwan

by Shokie Coe and C. S. Song, and elsewhere in Asia by Lynn de Silva.

## Chapter Five

### Establishing the Pure Land in This World—The Humanistic Buddhist Movement in Taiwan

#### Introduction

Having justified in theoretical terms the hypothesis that the dialogue of social action, grounded in the humanistic values of a shared Chinese Confucian legacy, offers the most viable approach to Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan, the purpose of the next two chapters is to explore the degree in which contemporary developments within the two religious communities provide resources that can sustain the hypothesis. The questions to be answered are as follows: how do contemporary Christianity and Buddhism in Taiwan interpret the social meaning of their respective faith traditions, and to what degree do these understandings open up a common ground for inter-religious dialogue?

The focus of this chapter lies on Taiwanese Buddhism, and is specifically concerned with the development, since the 1980s, of the movement known as ‘Humanistic Buddhism’<sup>1</sup> that seeks to transform Taiwanese Buddhism from its traditional tendency towards passive withdrawal from this world to active engagement in social affairs. Through reinterpreting Buddhist doctrines, ‘Humanistic Buddhism’ emphasises the importance of the human being and this world, and teaches Bodhisattva compassion as the superior Buddhist virtue and practice. This has produced a renewed understanding of the Buddhist mission – establishing the Pure Land in this world. One of the most striking features of contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism is the emergence of many Humanistic Buddhist organisations that actively pursue social actions such as environmental protection, charity, emergency relief, the revival of social morality and the reform of anti-social behaviour.

This chapter will therefore explore the origins of the Humanistic Buddhist movement, its doctrinal identity, and the social outreach that it has stimulated. The aim of the analysis is to assess the extent to which this transformation reflects the humanistic characteristics of Chinese culture, and to consider, in turn, what resources ‘Humanistic Buddhism’ can contribute to the contextual dialogue of social action

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Humanistic Buddhism’ here indicates the researcher’s preferred translation of Yinshun’s ‘人間佛教’. The literal translation should be ‘Buddhism of the Human World’. Its comprehensive meaning will be explained in the second part of this chapter. The translation ‘Humanistic Buddhism’ is borrowed from the English introduction to the work of one of the main Humanistic Buddhist organizations, Dharma Drum Mountain. See <http://www.ddm.org.tw>.



between Christianity and Buddhism in Taiwan.

Three groups of sources have been consulted in researching the character of 'Humanistic Buddhism.' Firstly, the writings of Hengching and Gu Weikang provide the main sources for understanding of traditional Chinese Buddhism as developed in Taiwan. It is against this background of other-worldly Buddhism that the significance of the modern development of 'Humanistic Buddhism' can be seen. The origins of 'Humanistic Buddhism' have been widely discussed in the writings of Jiang Chanteng, Yang Huinan, and Don A. Pittman. But the main source for the doctrinal interpretation of 'Humanistic Buddhism' is the writings of Master Yinshun (1906-present), who is considered by Taiwanese Buddhist scholars as the founder and leading exponent of the new teaching. By examining his abundant publications, this chapter will show how Yinshun establishes the theoretical foundations for his transformed understanding of Buddhism in terms of humanistic engagement with this world for the realisation of the Pure Land. Turning from doctrinal theory to social practice, Yang Huinan's 'The Phenomenon and Characteristics of New Taiwanese Buddhism after the End of Martial Law: A Study Centred on Humanistic Buddhism (解嚴後台灣新興佛教現象及其特質：以人間佛教為中心的一個考察),' gives a general overview of the practices of the Humanistic Buddhist movement. In addition, the researcher has consulted the publications of the main Humanistic Buddhist organisations, which explain their mission and ministries, apply the teachings of Master Yinshun, and provide first-hand information about their activities.

### **The Origin of the Taiwanese Buddhist Tendency of Renouncing This World**

The Taiwanese Buddhist scholar, Yang Huinan (楊惠南), depicts traditional Taiwanese Buddhism as containing several attributes. The first is its consideration of the this world as worthless, and its admiration for an other-worldly expectation. The second is loosely-structured and inactive religious organizations. The third is its passiveness in social and cultural affairs. The last is its outdated ways of propagating Buddhist belief.<sup>2</sup> Among these four features, there is an especially display of Buddhist tendency towards withdrawal from this world. Yang Huinan claims that the root factor

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<sup>2</sup> Yang Huinan (楊惠南), *The Renouncing Characteristics and the Conflicts between Different Sects in Taiwanese Buddhism* (台灣佛教的出世性格與派系紛爭), in *The Expect of Contemporary Buddhist Thought* (當代佛教思想展望), Taipei, Taiwan: Dongdah Books (東大圖書公司), 1991, 1. The Chinese texts are: '1.厭棄本土而盛讚他方世界; 2.散漫而無作為的教徒組織; 3.社會政治, 文化事業的甚少參與; 4.傳教方法落伍.'

causing this tendency has to be traced back to the origins of Taiwanese Buddhism.<sup>3</sup> Chapter One notes that contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism is derived from two Buddhist groups. The earlier Taiwanese Buddhism was introduced from southern China in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. The second came to Taiwan with the KMT government in the 1940s. A study of the groups' origins points to their legacy from the same Chinese Buddhist tradition, and their place in the same Dharma lineage, which is the syncretism of Chan and Pure Land beliefs (禪淨融合). A recipient of this lineage, Taiwanese Buddhism also displays the qualities of worldly renunciation. The following paragraph will describe how the belief of syncretism of Chan and Pure Land became the main stream of Chinese Buddhism and how it brought about the characteristic of renouncing from this world in Chinese and Taiwanese Buddhism.

### **The Syncretism of Chan and Pure Land Belief in Chinese Buddhism**

#### **Chan and Pure Land--Two Popular Buddhist Beliefs after the Post-Tang Period**

Hengching (釋恆清), a scholastic Taiwanese Buddhist nun, divides Chinese Buddhist history into two periods, with the Tang Dynasty (唐朝, 618-907 CE) as the line of demarcation.<sup>4</sup> She asserts that pre-Tang Buddhism was in the sage of development, adjusting to its 'introduction to a highly developed civilization, struggling for acceptance, assimilation into the culture, and ultimate 'conquest' of China.'<sup>5</sup> It was then in the Tang Dynasty that the major Chinese Buddhist Schools were formulated;<sup>6</sup> but, it was also in the Tang period that Chinese Buddhism started to decline. The social and political chaos in the later Tang Dynasty and the 845 CE Huichang Persecution (會昌教難) wiped out the vitality of most of the institutional Chinese Buddhist schools. After the reconstruction of Chinese Buddhism in the Sung Dynasty (970-1279 CE), only Chan and Pure Land Schools endured to become two most popular Buddhist schools in China. The other eight schools either died out or exerted little influence.

#### **Factors of Chan and Pure Land's Popularity**

Hengching suggests that the reason why the Chan and Pure Land sects survived

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> Shi Hengching, *The Syncretism of Chan and Pure Land Buddhism*, New York, New York: Peter Lang, 1992, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> These Schools included two Hīnayāna schools: Chengshi (成實) and Jushe (俱舍), and eight Mahāyāna schools: Chan (禪), Pure Land (淨土), Tiantai (天台), Huayen (華嚴), Fahsiang (法相), Sanlun (三論), Lu (律), and Tantric (密).

the persecution to become the two most popular Buddhist schools was their 'portable' characteristics. During the Huichang persecution, these two schools did not need to rely heavily on scriptures as the other philosophical schools and they were economically self-sufficient without depending on imperial patronage.<sup>7</sup> A more dominant factor is that Chan and Pure Land contain certain attributes that are more suitable for Chinese culture; the first of which is the Chan and Pure Land's focus on religious practices rather than philosophical investigation. Most Chinese Buddhist schools constructed complicated belief systems to better understand the Buddhist faith and the paths to Nirvāṇa. This philosophical tendency was not really accepted by the Chinese people, and thus their beliefs attracted only a small number of intellectual followers. Contrary to this metaphysical tendency, both Chan and Pure Land Schools simplified their doctrinal systems and focused on clear and simple paths to enlightenment. Chan's epistemology, 'the Dharma delivered apart from textual teachings (教外別傳),' claims that the best way to comprehend the Dharmam and to achieve Nirvāṇa is to discover inner Buddha nature through meditation. Pure Land provides a simple path, claiming nien-fo (念佛) as the path to acquire the salvation of Amitābha and to enter an other-worldly Pure Land, where those who dwell there are guaranteed to eventually attain Nirvāṇa. Both schools provide simple and practical ways to meet the needs of people. This is well in accords with Chinese religious pragmatism and is more acceptable to Chinese people.

Their second commonality, parallel with Chinese culture, is Chan and Pure Land's this-worldly concern. The Buddhist tradition usually claim that Nirvāṇa is a realm where people withdraw from this world to enter into an indescribable condition. Although Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism had already developed the concept that Nirvāṇa can be experienced in this world, this belief was fully articulated and advocated by Chinese Chan Schools. The concept that the Pure Land is in an other-worldly realm does not mean that there is no this-worldly dimension to it. Master Shantao (善導大師, 613-681CE), one of the distinguished Pure Land masters in the Tang Dynasty, contributed to the belief of acquiring this-worldly bliss from nien-fo, claiming that 'regularly calling on Amitābha will help one acquire long lives, and prevent misfortunes and disasters'<sup>8</sup> through which the this-worldly element was added to an

<sup>7</sup> Shi Hengching, *The Syncretism of Chan and Pure Land Buddhism*, New York, New York: Peter Lang, 1992, 2-3.

<sup>8</sup> The text is from Shantao's *the Paths of Meditation and Chanting* (觀念法門), see Huiyang (釋慧嚴), *General View of Pure Land* (淨土概論), Taipei: Dongdah Books, 1998, 146-147. The Chinese text is: '謹依釋迦佛教六部往生經等, 顯明稱念阿彌陀佛願生淨土者, 現生即得延年轉壽, 不遭九橫三'

extreme other-worldly belief, and therefore brought great acceptance by Chinese people.<sup>9</sup> Accentuating the role of practices and this-worldly concern became factors in the popularity of Chan and Pure Land Buddhism after the late Tang period, and presents an example of how adoptable Buddhist belief adapted itself to gain acceptance from Chinese people.

### Syncretism of Chan and Pure Land Beliefs

Chan and Pure Land not only became the two main Buddhist schools in China, but they also syncretised themselves with each other. In the pre-Tang period, these two schools were usually considered to contain major discrepancies and held a critical polemical standpoint towards each other. At the end of the Sung Dynasty, through the advocacy of Master Yungming Yenshow (永明延壽), the two schools begun to claim that paths from both schools both could lead people to Nirvāṇa and would go so far as to supplement one another. Masters in both schools started to integrate each other's practices into their own.

This raises the question of how Pure Land Buddhism, a school with a clear dependence on external efforts, eventually syncretised itself with Chan, a school maintain the strong characteristic of self-effort. Hengching indicates that it is because syncretism, rather than sectarian rivalry, is characteristic of Chinese culture.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the Chinese Buddhist scholar, Gu Weikang (顧偉康), states that on the surface, these two schools appear different, but they contain parallel essences.<sup>11</sup> The above paragraph made mention that both beliefs simplified complicated Buddhist doctrines, and advocated simple paths to solve the human needs to get relief from suffering of this world. These tendencies not only make these schools more acceptable to Chinese people, but also provide a fertile ground for integration. The syncretism of the beliefs and practices in these two schools eventually became the prevalent Chinese Buddhist belief after Sung Dynasty.

### Chan-Pure Land Syncretism: The Origin of Buddhist Other-worldly Characteristics

Although the syncretism of Chan and Pure Land contains a stronger this-worldly

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<sup>9</sup> Huiyang (慧嚴法師), *Viewing the Concept of Pure Land from Humanistic Perspective (從人間性看淨土思想)*, Kaohsiung, Taiwan: Chunhui Publishing (台灣高雄: 春暉出版社), 2000, 76.

<sup>10</sup> Shi Hengching, *The Syncretism of Chan and Pure Land Buddhism*, New York, New York: Peter Lang, 1992, 7-18.

<sup>11</sup> Gu Weikang (顧偉康), *A Survey of the Syncretism of Chan and Pure Land (禪淨合一流略)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Dongdah Books, 1997, 72-3.

element than other Buddhist schools, this element would become the origin of Buddhist apathy towards the reformation of society, due in part to the root emphasis on individualism. Therefore, the this-worldly elements in Chan and Pure Land do not provide the conceptual framework for Buddhist participation in social affairs in making contributions to social reform. Although Chan Buddhism does contain this-worldly beliefs about experiencing Nirvāṇa ‘here and now’, its belief in ultimate destiny still refers to a release from this world. A more crucial reason why Chinese Buddhism has a strong other-worldly tendency is that the Pure Land School seeks to attain rebirth in Amitābha’s Pure Land. This belief is considered by Humanistic Buddhist scholars Yang Huinan and Jiang Chanteng, to be the acute factor in Chinese Buddhism’s central focus on renouncing this world which is the subject of Humanistic Buddhists criticism.<sup>12</sup> The following paragraphs will introduce the basic beliefs of Pure Land and analyse how they cause an other-worldly tendency.

### **Pure Land Belief and its Other-worldly Characteristics**

#### **Scriptural Sources and Historical Setting**

The earliest textual sources of the Pure Land School prove that this belief originated from early Mahāyāna Buddhism. These sources include three Mahāyāna Sūtras and one discourse: the larger Sukhāvatīvyūha (大阿彌陀經, the Longer Land of Bliss Sūtra), the smaller Sukhāvatīvyūha (阿彌陀經, the Shorter Land of Bliss Sūtra), the Amitāyurdhyāna (觀無量壽經, the Contemplating Amitāyus Sūtra), and the Sukhāvatīvyūha Abhidharma (往生論, the Discourse of the Land of Bliss).<sup>13</sup> The first two sutras were proven to be from the early Mahāyāna period and indicate that the Amitābha belief had already existed in India from the earliest days of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

This Indian belief was introduced to China through the translation of the Pure Land Sūtra in the third century CE.<sup>14</sup> By the efforts of some patriarchs prior to the

<sup>12</sup> See Yang Huinan, *The Renouncing Characteristics and the Conflicts between Different Sects in Taiwanese Buddhism*, in *The Prospects of Contemporary Buddhist Beliefs*, Taipei, Taiwan: Dongdah Books, 1991, 11-41; and Jiang Chanteng, *The New Direction of Contemporary Taiwanese Pure Land Belief* (台灣當代淨土思想的新動向), *Contemporary (當代)*, 28, August 1988, 46-62.

<sup>13</sup> The English names of these scriptures and discourse are directly translated from their Pali names, see William Edward & Lewis Hoochoos, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Term with Sanskrit & English Equivalents and A Sanskrit-Pali Index*, Richmond, Surrey, UK: Curzon Press, 1995, but their Chinese names are from traditional Chinese texts.

<sup>14</sup> Mochizuki Shinry (望月信亨), *The Doctrinal History of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism* (中國淨土教理史), Yin-Hai (釋印海), translator, Taipei, Taiwan: Zheng-Wen Publication (正聞出版社), 1991, 9-12.



Tang Dynasty,<sup>15</sup> this belief was established in ways that reflected the particularities of the Chinese context, and was also developed into a complete belief system with a distinct school. The following paragraph will portray its doctrines and show how they brought about the withdrawal characteristic.

### Amitābha and His Salvation

The first doctrinal element is the belief in devotion to Amitābha and seeking his salvation. Pure Land Buddhists believe that Amitābha is the most outstanding Buddha and that his vows contain the most miraculous power to save people from this impure world. The name, Amitābha, means ‘the Buddha of immeasurable light.’<sup>16</sup> The significance of ‘immeasurable’ declares the superiority of Amitābha over all other Buddhas. According to the Pure Land Sūtras, before becoming a Buddha, Amitābha had been a monk named Dharmākara, and lived ten kalpas ago.<sup>17</sup> After listening to another Buddha, Lokêśvara-rāja, delivering the Dharma, Dharmākara made vows to become Buddha. The contents of his vows include the following features.<sup>18</sup> Firstly, he swore to establish a most splendid and blissful Pure Land. Secondly, he swore that he would not enter Nirvāṇa until he had enabled all living beings to achieve rebirth in his Pure Land. Thirdly, he also emphasised nien-fo as the path by which living beings can achieve rebirth in his Pure Land. The sublimity of Amitābha and the efficacious power of his vows became a basic element of popular devotion to him that marks the character of the Pure Land School.

It is generally Buddhist teaching that the vows of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas represent Mahāyāna’s spirit of compassion for all living beings and the Dharma’s power to save people from the suffering of this impure world. But this spirit is expressed in two divergent lines of thought. The first emphasises that their compassion should be model for people to follow, creating a motivation for people to care for others and to contribute to the communal welfare. The second vein, however, holds that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas become the subjects of devotion on the part of the

<sup>15</sup> These early patriarchs include Huiyang (慧遠, 344-461 CE), Tanluan (曇鸞, 476-542 CE), Taocho (道綽, 565-642 CE), Shantao (善導, 613-681 CE).

<sup>16</sup> He has another name, Amitāyus, means ‘the Buddha of immeasurable life.’

<sup>17</sup> A kalpa means a cycle of the formation and destruction of the physical universe. The actual length of the kalpa is different in different scriptures. It at least shows that the date Dharmākara made vows and became a Buddha was long before the present universe was formed.

<sup>18</sup> The records of the numbers of Amitābha’s vow in Chinese sutras include 24, 36, 47, 48, and 49. The later versions describe a greater number of vows. It is concluded that the number of vows was added in the later translations.



faithful, who call on their help in overcoming human suffering. This provides a comforting hope for people in their sufferings, but at the same time, it cultivates a reliance on salvation via an external agent at the expense of good deeds and social responsibility. The Amitābha belief clearly belongs to this latter Buddhist development.

### Amitābha Pure Land

The second facet of the Pure Land School is the belief in the existence of the Amitābha Pure Land. It is the goal of all Pure Land followers to achieve rebirth in this land of splendor, thereby escaping the suffering of this world. Belief in the existence of the Pure Land, in which the Buddhas created and dwell in, is common to all forms of Mahāyāna Buddhism. In Buddhist scriptures, several Pure Lands are mentioned.<sup>19</sup> However, the Pure Land School describes the Amitābha Pure Land as an outstanding place with a specific character. Its natural environment and architecture are wonderfully adorned with golden light. Dwellers enjoy abundant lives, and human relationships are marked by peace. Nothing exists that can allure the inhabitants to do evil. Not only does Amitābha teach the Dharma but the air is filled with Buddha's sounds so that people may easily practice the Dharma without any obstacles. Such a wonderful environment means the dwellers will never fall back into Saṃsāra and definitely attained Nirvāṇa. The magnificence of Amitābha Pure Land stands in splendid contrast to the impure world of mundane existence. Contrary to the chaos and sufferings in the impure land, Amitābha Pure Land presents a model of an ideal world providing human beings with hope and comfort in their earthly sufferings.

There are two other features of Amitābha Pure Land that should be addressed here. The first is that the Pure Land School considers the Amitābha Pure Land accessible to ordinary people, contrary to the normal Buddhist concept of Pure Land which is only open to Bodhisattvas or arhats. The Pure Land School teaches that Amitābha's compassion and power are so great that no one would be excluded from his Pure Land. Furthermore, the Amitābha Pure Land exists in another world, lying to the west at a distance of ten trillion Buddha Lands from this world,<sup>20</sup> meaning that humans can only achieve rebirth in this land after death. The breath of this distance

<sup>19</sup> The Pure Lands mentioned in Buddhist scriptures include Amitābha Pure Land, Akṣobhya Pure Land, Bhaiṣajyaguru Pure Land, and Maitreya Pure Land.

<sup>20</sup> There are ten trillion Buddha Lands between Amitābha Pure Land and this world. Actually how far the distance between a Buddha land is unknown. This shows at the very that Amitābha Pure Land is very far away.

shows that the Amitābha Pure Land is not connected with this world, encouraging Pure Land followers to concentrate on a distant place, ignoring the value of this world.

### Nien-fo -- An Easy Path

The Pure Land School teaches that nien-fo is an easy path for achieving rebirth in the Amitābha Pure Land. The notion of an easy path is one of the factors, which have granted the Pure Land School its popularity. *Pratyutpanna-samādhi Sūtra* (般舟三昧經) established the concept of nien-fo as the definitive model of an easy path in early Mahāyāna Buddhism.<sup>21</sup> It was adopted by the Pure Land School, but with a significant re-emphasis of meaning. In the early Sūtras, the Chinese word nien, 念, which means thinking or concentration, was used to advocate meditation.<sup>22</sup> Through concentrating on Amitābha, a practitioner would be inspired by his compassion and good deeds, and could thus achieve a purification of the heart. The other meaning, more properly written in the character 唸, denotes reading or recitation. This was the meaning preferred by the patriarchs of the Pure Land School, who emphasised the practice of continuously reciting Amitābha's name. In this manner, the recitation of Amitābha's name became the fundamental practice of the Pure Land School.

Although nien-fo provides an easy path for all people to practice, it does so at the expense of nurturing virtue through self-effort and heightens a dependence on an external saviour. On both counts, the Pure Land School has been criticised for deviating from traditional Buddhism. However, Pure Land leaders argue that since the Buddhist age has already entered 'the period of the degenerate Dharma (末法時期),' which marks one thousand five hundred years from the death of Śākyamuni, the easy path thus becomes the most effective way of nurturing believers' virtue and attainment of Nirvāṇa. Because the practitioners focus only on calling on the name of Amitābha, they lack the time to think about or commit evil.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, they argue that Amitābha's help does not eliminate the need for self-effort, because Amitābha Pure Land is not the final goal but only an intermediate place, where the practice of the Dharma becomes even easier, with the requirement that attaining Nirvāṇa in Pure Land still requires personal effort in practicing the Dharma once there. In this, the Pure

<sup>21</sup> Yinshun, *Pure Land and Chan* (淨土與禪), rev. ed., Taipei, Taiwan: Zheng-Wen Publication (台灣台北: 正聞出版社), 1995, 43-46.

<sup>22</sup> Chinese word, 佛 (Fo) means Buddha.

<sup>23</sup> Mochizuki, Shinry, *The Doctrinal History of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism*, trans. Shi, Yin-Hai, Taipei: Zheng-Wen Publication, 1991, 296.

Land belief declares that the easy path, nien-fo, and the salvation of Amitābha do not deviate from original Buddhism.

### The Assessment of Pure Land Belief

The central devotion to Amitābha as a doctrinal element are presented by the Pure Land School as a response to the chaos and sufferings of this impure world, and are based on the expectation of an ideal world. As mentioned, the popularity of the Pure Land School among the Chinese people lies in its simple applicability as a way of solving the problem of life and death (called 了生死 in Chinese), eschewing the complicated philosophical belief systems of other Chinese Buddhist schools. Moreover, the Pure Land School's focus on other-worldly expectation is attractive to people who are in the midst of suffering. The history of Buddhism in China demonstrates that the Pure Land belief flourished when and where the suffering of the ordinary people was most intense, illustrating that the expectation of an ideal Pure Land brought comfort to those in despair.

However, this belief of the Pure Land School also brought about the characteristics of worldly renunciation in Chinese Buddhism. For though the belief in Amitābha's salvation provides psychological comfort to suffering people, it also posits a divine personal saviour, reducing the value of human virtue and moral conduct. The distance of the Amitābha Pure Land from earth and its requirement of death for admission present the Pure Land's total detachment from this 'impure' world, encouraging the followers to concentrate on a distant place and to ignore the value of this world. Notwithstanding the argument of the Pure Land teachers that the achievement of the Dharma requires self-effort, the Pure Land School can be evenly criticised for nurturing a tendency of downplaying the value of its followers' good deeds. If a follower has to recite Amitābha's name tens of thousands of times each day, there is evidently little time left for doing good works and exercising social responsibility. Since nien-fo becomes a guarantee for rebirth in the Amitābha Pure Land, good deeds are considered secondarily. In reality, little importance is given to improving one's personal or social state in this world such is the pre-occupation with the promised Pure Land of the future.

### The Legacy of Pure Land Belief to Chinese and Taiwanese Buddhism

The above features demonstrate that, although Pure Land Buddhism provides certain psychological comforts for Chinese Buddhists, they bring Chinese Buddhism

into a state of earthly withdrawal. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese Buddhism's perceived tendency to renounce a concern for the affairs of this world provoked the criticism of Chinese scholars, who were fighting to save China from invasive Western colonialism. During the final years of the Qing Dynasty, the corruption of government, social chaos, and Western colonial advances threatened China with national disaster. To rescue the nation, Chinese intellectuals searched for ways to revive the country. Buddhism was thought by many Confucian intellectuals to be valueless in this fight. A representative criticism was from Liang Shuming (梁漱溟), in his 'Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies,' Liang declares that Buddhism 'focuses only on other-worldly affairs and ignores human present life. This leads to the Buddhist incapability of vitality and its irrelevance in the modern world.'<sup>24</sup>

This element of Chinese Buddhism was passed on to traditional Taiwanese Buddhism. Modern Taiwanese Buddhist scholars analyse the factors as to why Chinese and Taiwanese Buddhism withdrew from interactions with the modern world. A direct but over-simplified answer states that the decline of Chinese Buddhism in the late Ming and Qing Dynasties, was because of government oppression and corrupt Buddhist organisations.<sup>25</sup> There is another view that is worth consideration, which is that both Chan and Pure Land belief contains the element of withdrawing from this world. This is why Taiwanese Buddhist scholar Yang Huinan argues that all the elements of Pure Land belief combine to give Chinese and Taiwanese Buddhism the character of a world-denying religion.<sup>26</sup>

## Modern Reform Movements in Chinese Buddhism

### Early Lay Reform Pioneers

In the late Qing period, some Chinese Buddhists recognised this problem and stuck out to change this situation. The criticism of Confucian scholars prompted Buddhists to rethink how Chinese Buddhism could contribute to modern China.<sup>27</sup> These reform movements were started by some lay pioneers with the motivation of affirming their ancient religious tradition as valuable part of Chinese culture, and of

<sup>24</sup> Liang Shuming (梁漱溟), *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies* (東西文化及其哲學), Taipei: Li-Ren Books (里仁書局), 1983, 248-249. The Chinese texts are: '(佛教) 是專談現世以外的生活, 不談現世生活. 這樣就導致佛教在現代中沒有多大活動的可能.'

<sup>25</sup> See Yu Lingpo (于凌波), *The Concise Survey of Buddhist Beliefs* (簡明佛學概論), Taipei, Taiwan: Dongdah Books, 1991, 163-172.

<sup>26</sup> Yang Huinan (楊惠南), *The Expectation of Contemporary Buddhist Thoughts*, Taipei, Taiwan: Dongdah Books, 1991, 16-18.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 82-84.

improving the public image of Buddhism through various devotional, educational, and social services.<sup>28</sup> Some of them, such as Yang Wenhui (楊文會) and Ouyang Jingwu (歐陽竟無), devoted themselves to the study of the Buddhist doctrines and contributed greatly in inspiring young Buddhists to rediscover original Buddhist doctrines. Some, such as Liang Qichao (梁啟超) and Tan Sitong (譚嗣同), related Buddhist belief to practical movements of political and social reformation.

### Master Taixu's Reform Movement

Among these Chinese Buddhist reformers, Taixu played a crucial role in greatly influenced the reformation of this period, which also indirectly influenced the later Taiwanese reformation. He was the first to advocate the concept of 'Humanistic Buddhism,'<sup>29</sup> claiming that it is a Buddhism of 'improving the society, promoting human progression, and reforming the world through Buddhist belief.'<sup>30</sup> Taixu firmly believed that the propagation of this modern form of Buddhism held the key not only to saving his country but to promoting a just and peaceful global civilisation. He commended to Mahāyāna Buddhism an ethical form of piety that centered Bodhiśattva practices not on the exercises of religious philosophy, sitting meditation, or ritual observance, but on expressions of enlightened social responsibility within this world.<sup>31</sup> In order to provide a Buddhism that could actively engage in Chinese social reformation, Taixu proposed three revolutions of Chinese Buddhism: a re-thinking of doctrine, a reform of the monastic system, and a redistribution of temple properties.<sup>32</sup>

However, since almost all the Buddhist temples in China were controlled by conservative Buddhist leaders at that time, Taixu's advocacy was not accepted by the monastic classes. In fact, his attempts at reformation caused tension between the

<sup>28</sup> Don A. Pittman, *Towards A Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu's Reforms*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Taixu used the 'Buddhism of Human Life (人生佛教)' to define his Humanistic Buddhist movement, which is different from Yinshun's 'Buddhism of Human World (人間佛教).' However, the differences of the terminological meanings between these two Chinese phrases actually do not express the differences of their thinking.

<sup>30</sup> Taixu, *The Full of Collection of Master Taixu's Writings*, V. 34 (太虛大師全書, 第34冊), 431, see Jiang Chantern, *Taiwanese Buddhism and Modern Society (台灣佛教與現代社會)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Dongdah Books, 1992, 180. The Chinese text is: '人間佛教...乃是以佛教的道理來改良社會,使人類進步,把世界改善的宗教.'

<sup>31</sup> Don A. Pittman, *Towards A Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu's Reforms*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001, 62.

<sup>32</sup> Yang Huinan, *The Expectation of Contemporary Buddhist Thought*, Taipei, Taiwan: Dongdah Books plc, 1991, 75. In Chinese, these three revolutions are called '教理(學理)革命, 僧制(組織)革命, 寺產(財產)革命.'

conservatives and progressives. Taixu admitted with sadness in 1936 CE that none of these Buddhist revolutions succeeded.<sup>33</sup> Modern Buddhist scholars have analysed the factors of his failure. His reform movements were over-idealistic and too advanced, and at the same time they lacked practical strategies.<sup>34</sup> His ideas came up against conservative opposition and left his reformation with only a little support from the younger generation.<sup>35</sup> In all, he lacked a solid theoretical foundation for this reformation, one which could further the doctrinal transformation of Chinese Buddhism.<sup>36</sup>

### Legacy of Taixu

Although his reformation was considered a failure at the time, his ideas sowed the seeds for a later reform movement in Chinese Buddhism and would bring about later success in Taiwan. Many young monks studied in the Buddhist colleges established by Taixu. Under his instruction, these monks acquired a vision of Buddhist and social reformation. These reform monks came to Taiwan in 1949 CE and eventually brought about the Buddhist transformation and revival during the 1980s. Some of them worked on doctrinal transformation, which provided a theoretical foundation for this reformation. Yinshun is the most prominent figure in this respect. Others led practical reform movements and acquired great success. Two leaders from four of the Taiwanese Buddhist complexes, Shinyun and Shengyen, admit that their ministries are influenced by Taixu and that they carry on his vision of 'Humanistic Buddhism.'

### **Doctrinal Foundation of 'Humanistic Buddhism' – The Thinking of Master Yinshun**

Many Taiwanese Buddhist scholars assert that Yinshun played a crucial role in the doctrinal transformation of modern Taiwanese Buddhism. His thinking on 'Humanistic Buddhism' provided a theoretical foundation through which this new wave of Taiwanese Buddhism became socially engaged, in a way that has inspired

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Jiang Chanteng, *New Perspective on Modern Chinese Buddhism* (現代中國佛教史新論), Kaohsiung, Taiwan: Jingxin Cultural and Educational Fund (台灣高雄: 淨心文教基金會), 1994, 140-154.

<sup>35</sup> Don A. Pittman, *Towards A Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu's Reforms*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001, 59-60.

<sup>36</sup> Yang Huinan, *The Expectation of Contemporary Buddhist Thought*, Taipei, Taiwan: Dongdah Books plc, 1991, 86-108.



many Buddhist leaders to reconsider the Buddhist duty to the community. The aim of the second section is to examine Yinshun's thinking; it will seek to discover how Yinshun justifies 'Humanistic Buddhism' as an expression of the real substance of orthodox Buddhist belief, how he interprets this substance, and how 'Humanistic Buddhism' leads to the transformation of Taiwanese Buddhism from world-denying to world-affirming.

## **Biography and Origins of Yinshun's Doctrinal Reformation**

### **Brief Biography**

Yinshun was born in 1906 CE to a farming family in Haining, Zhejiang (浙江, 海寧). In his book, 'My Perspective on Religions (我的宗教觀),' Yinshun mentions that he eagerly sought a religion to help him solve the problems of life and death in his early years.<sup>37</sup> After exploring Confucianism, Daoism, and Christianity, he finally turned to Buddhism and found it to be the 'most reasonable and comprehensive religion.'<sup>38</sup> In 1928 CE, following the death of both his parents within a short period of time from each other, which left him with a sense about the impermanence of life, Yinshun thought about becoming a monk. Although unsatisfied with the status of Buddhist temples and monasteries around him, he finally became a monk in 1930 CE. One year after his tonsure, he moved to South Fukien Seminary (閩南佛學院), a seminary founded by Taixu, to begin his systematic study of Buddhist doctrine. From 1931 to 1945, he stayed at several Temples and Buddhist seminaries, read and reread the entire Chinese translation of Buddhist texts, Tripitaka (大藏經), and studied Buddhist doctrines with Taixu's students. It was in this period that he constructed his own interpretation of Buddhist doctrine.

After the establishment of the Communist regime in China, Yinshun first moved to Hong Kong, and then to Taiwan. In Taiwan, his criticism of Pure Land belief brought objections from conservative Buddhist leaders and the suspicion of the KMT government. After being oppressed in 1954 CE, Yinshun devoted himself to private studies for a period of time and developed his thinking, seeking a mature and complete system, and afterwards his writings were increasingly read by young Taiwanese Buddhists. Large quantities of his writings were published and studied. With the changing social circumstances in the 1980s, his concept of 'Humanistic Buddhism'

<sup>37</sup> Yinshun, *How Did I Choose Buddhism? (我怎樣選擇了佛教)* in *My Perspective on Religions (我的宗教觀)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Zheng-Wen Publication (正聞出版社), 1992, 301-305.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 305.

enjoyed an ever-increasing influence on Taiwanese Buddhism.

### Origins of Yishun's Buddhist Reformation

Yinshun's biography suggests that there were two main stimuli in his doctrinal reformation. The first source was the instruction of Taixu. He became the main successor to Taixu's thinking on 'Humanistic Buddhism.' Although he holds some different doctrinal perspectives than that of Taixu, Yinshun always concedes his indebtedness to his master.<sup>39</sup> Like Taixu, Yinshun is primarily concerned with the reformation of Buddhist beliefs and institutions in such a way so as to revive Buddhism to be a constructive contributor to the present society.

The second source of Yinshun's reform thinking was his own experiences with Chinese Buddhism. In his principal autobiographical work, 'An Ordinary Life (平凡的一生),' Yinshun recalls that 'In the area I lived... the temples are full of burned incense and lightened candles for the dead, and the monks are busy with chanting for the dying and with the funerals... Through my shallow understanding of Buddhist belief, I did not believe that these expressed real Buddhist Dharma.'<sup>40</sup> It was this disparity between his perception of essential character of Dharma and the popular practice of Chinese Buddhism that provoked him to develop his reform thinking. In particular, it prompted him to investigate the essence of Buddhist doctrine.

### Historical Development of Indian Buddhism

Yinshun started his study with the development of Indian Buddhist history on the grounds that Indian Buddhism provided the historical source for all the later developments of Buddhist traditions in different parts of the world.<sup>41</sup> His study of Indian Buddhism was concerned with three facets. The first was to discern the original character of the Buddhist Dharma. The second was to identify particular characteristics that Buddhism developed in each period of its history. The third was to discover how Taiwanese Buddhism could retrieve the essence of original Buddhism. These three concerns constitute the intellectual framework for his concept of 'Humanistic Buddhism,' which he claims, re-expresses the essence of Buddhism in a

<sup>39</sup> Yinshun, *60 Years' Trip in the Sea of Dharma (遊心法海六十年)* in *Collections of Magnificent Rain, V5 (華雨集 第五冊)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Zheng-Wen Publication, 1994, 6.

<sup>40</sup> Yinshun, *An Ordinary Life (平凡的一生)*, rev. ed., Taipei: Zheng-Wen Publication, 1994, 4. The Chinese text is: '在我生活的小天地裡...有的是香火道場,有的是經懺應付...我從經論得來的有限知識...不相信佛法就是這樣.'

<sup>41</sup> Yinshun, *Indian Buddhism (印度之佛教)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Zheng-Wen Publication, 1992, 1.

way most appropriate for a Taiwanese context.<sup>42</sup>

### The Cause of the Development of Buddhist Doctrines

Yinshun identifies a number of factors that spurred the change in the Śākyamuni Buddha's original teachings. The first factor is Buddha's own acceptance of the principle that each individual has to find a personal way of accepting and practicing the Dharma particular to his or her own condition. Śākyamuni was the first person to know, experience, and embody the Dharma in his own life, and thus he is the source of instruction for people seeking release from sufferings of this world. However, Śākyamuni was faced with the dilemma that not everyone possesses the wisdom to comprehend the Dharma in the same way as he did. Therefore, he had to express the Dharma in ways that ordinary people would understand. For instance, he borrowed the Hindu concept of Karma to encourage people to perform good deeds, even though he did not accept it as being essential in attaining Nirvāṇa. He did not object to some of his disciples like Mahākāśyapa practicing asceticism, even though he thought it was inessential to the Buddhist path. In these ways, Śākyamuni showed his tolerance towards the variety of Dharmic interpretations and articulated his vision of the Dharma as a broad path that could embrace various means of implementation. Yinshun believes that the cost of this strategy is the inclusion of otherwise needless elements into the practices of the Dharma.

The second factor leading to a change in the Buddhist understanding of the Dharma is the fact that after the death of Śākyamuni, his followers yearned for him so much that he was exalted and deified.<sup>43</sup> Gradually, many sutras concerning Śākyamuni's previous lives as Bodhisattvas and deities appeared, describing his miraculous deeds and compassion. Furthermore, practices such as venerating his sarira and relics, and the belief in the presence of Buddha in this world, became popular among Buddhists. These cults of Buddha worship appealed to the psychological needs of his earliest disciples, who missed him so much, and continued the practices thereafter as an emotional facet of Buddhist religiosity. In this respect, the original teachings of the Dharma accumulated many non-Buddhist elements as new people were attracted to the Buddhist faith. Though noting that this was a factor in the

<sup>42</sup> Yinshun, *Humanistic Buddhism—A Concept that Express the Essence of Buddhism and Is Appropriate for Contemporary Context* (契理契機的人間佛教) in *Collections of Magnificent Rain, V4* (華雨集 第四冊), Taipei, Taiwan: Zheng-Wen Publication, 1998, 69.

<sup>43</sup> Yinshun, *The Origin and Development of Early Mahāyāna Buddhism* (初期大乘佛教之起源和發展), Taipei, Taiwan: Zheng-Wen Publication, 1994, 11.

successful cultural expansion of Buddhism, Yinshun rejects that the deification of Śākyamuni was in any way of the original Dharma teaching.

A more general application of this argument is evident in Yinshun's acceptance that contextualisation is an unavoidable and often necessary process in religion. In extending his argument that Śākyamuni himself encouraged his disciples to adapt the teaching of the Dharma to their own circumstances, he also accepts that the process of contextualisation inevitably admits different cultural elements into the understanding and practice of the Dharma.<sup>44</sup> For instance, Hīnayāna Buddhism could not avoid the tendency of Hindu asceticism, just as Mahāyāna engaged with the influence of Hindu philosophical pantheism. But Yinshun also argues that if Buddhism is to avoid becoming enmeshed in different cultures at the expense of its own creative power, it is necessary to distinguish those aspects of Buddhist beliefs which are of the essence of the Dharma, from those which are the products of the various cultural contexts in which Buddhism has taken root. Contextualisation therefore must not come at the expense of the essence of Śākyamuni's original teachings.<sup>45</sup>

These factors show that in the development of Indian Buddhism, original Buddhist doctrines were unavoidably distorted, resulting in the development of various Buddhist traditions. In this, Yinshun declares the importance of returning to the original essence of Buddhism. The question is what exactly is the original doctrinal essence, and Yinshun indicates that a historical study of Indian Buddhism provides an answer.

#### Yinshun's Analysis of Indian Buddhist History

In his writing, 'Indian Buddhism,' Yinshun divides Indian Buddhist history into five periods.<sup>46</sup> The first he identifies is the period of Primal Buddhism (the fifth BCE) that centers on the life of Śākyamuni and his disciples. Yinshun characterises this as a period of denial of any supernatural element and an insistence on simply obedience to the Vinaya. The spiritual goal of this period was to find release from the suffering of this phenomenal world. In order to adapt the Dharma to existing Hindu asceticism, this period placed the monastic group at the heart of the Buddhist community. Generally, it shows a strong spirit of self-interest, though Śākyamuni himself lived in the example of Bodhisattva's compassion.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 464, 488, 498.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 488.

<sup>46</sup> Yinshun, *Indian Buddhism* (印度之佛教), Taipei, Taiwan: Zheng-Wen Publication, 1992, 4-7.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 4.

The second period is that of Sectarian Buddhism (the fifth to the first BCE), in which the goal of release from suffering and monasticism remained the defining characteristics, but it was at this time that reports of Śākyamuni's miraculous powers began to circulate. Hīnayāna was gaining popularity while Mahāyāna remained undeveloped.<sup>48</sup> These first two periods represent the origins of Hīnayāna Buddhism.

Yinshun divided Mahāyāna Buddhism into the third and the fourth periods, where the third period (the first BCE to the first CE) saw the rise of Mahāyāna. The most important emerging concept of this period was that of the Bodhisattva path. Whereas the first two periods of Indian Buddhism emphasised the importance of self-effort in the fulfillment of the Dharma, the Bodhisattva's compassion for saving people came into the forefront.<sup>49</sup> This also marked a shift from a monastic-centered Buddhism to one that gave greater consequence to the lay people, in which, living a cloistered life was not thought to be the sole means of attaining Nirvāṇa. However, some supernatural aspects, such as the concepts of Buddha's miraculous powers, ten directions' Buddhas, and external salvation begun to appear.<sup>50</sup> Yinshun is basically appreciative of this period's developments.

The fourth period (the first to the fifth CE) is that of the later Mahāyāna. Yinshun identifies the strong influence of Hindu pantheism in Buddhism, producing the belief in numerous Buddha and of a heaven deified with Buddhas. Therefore, Śākyamuni lost his unique place and was replaced by other deified Buddhas. The earlier understanding of the Bodhisattva as a human who had achieved the state of Nirvāṇa but instead chose to defer his entry in order to save other mortals, changed to that of a heavenly Bodhisattva, resulting in a Bodhisattva path that was qualitatively removed from the human world.<sup>51</sup> In addition, the concept of the Buddha nature existing within all living beings reflects the Hindu philosophy of the relationship between Brahṃā and ātman. It thus became possible for all living beings to become Buddhas,<sup>52</sup> a concept that allows for an easy path in practicing Dharma and attaining Nirvāṇa.<sup>53</sup> Yinshun is quite critical of the characteristics in this later Mahāyāna period, which embraced what he regards as the negative elements of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

His criticism becomes more strident in his analysis of the fifth period (the sixth to the tenth CE) of later Indian Buddhism. He sees this as a time of syncretism between

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.



popular Buddhism and popular Hindu pantheism, particularly in the belief in the instant attainment of Nirvāṇa through Tantra, the quasi-miraculous techniques of Buddhist practices.<sup>54</sup> He characterises this period as the suppression of Mahāyāna Bodhisattva's compassion by Hīnayāna's self-interests and such practices like a ritualised sexual union, which contradict the original Buddhist Vinaya.<sup>55</sup> Yinshun argues that such developments threatened to eradicate the original teachings of the Dharma, and lead to a final disappearance of Indian Buddhism.

### The Elements of the Real Essence of Buddhism

On the basis of his historical analysis, Yinshun is able to identify what he regards as the real essence of Buddhism, that which should be adopted by Taiwanese Buddhism. Yinshun gives primary importance to the Buddha's original historical life and his own speeches.<sup>56</sup> This procedure is not without its problems, since there is lingering uncertainty about which sutras belonged to the original teachings of Buddha and which belonged to its later developments. Nevertheless, Yinshun's purpose is to offer what he defines as the elements of original Buddhist beliefs.

According to Yinshun, the first essential element of the Dharma belonging to the Primal Period, is the exclusion of any deity worship or supernatural power, because the original state of Śākyamuni was that of a human being, living a human life in this impure world without the aid of miraculous powers or divine elements.<sup>57</sup> The second element is the Bodhisattva path that was first established in the early Mahāyāna period. Yinshun does not accept, as historical the sutras that describe, Śākyamuni's previous lives being a miraculous divinity or a Bodhisattva, which become commonly accepted as the origin of the Bodhisattva path.<sup>58</sup> Rather, he thinks that Śākyamuni's examples in his forty-three years' experience of propagating the Dharma and the display of compassion in his life, constitute the factual origin of the Bodhisattva path.<sup>59</sup> The third essential element of the Dharma is the obedience to the Vinaya that needs to be

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 42-43.

<sup>56</sup> Yinshun, *Humanistic Buddhism—A Concept that Express the Essence of Buddhism and Is Suitable Contemporary Context* in *Collections of Magnificent Rain, V4*, Taipei, Taiwan: Zheng-Wen Publication, 1998, 18.

<sup>57</sup> Yinshun, *Buddha in Human World (佛在人間)*, rev. ed., Taipei, Taiwan: Zheng-Wen Publication, 2000, 2.

<sup>58</sup> Yinshun, *Humanistic Buddhism—A Concept that Express the Essence of Buddhism and Is Suitable Contemporary Context*, in *Collections of Magnificent Rain, V4*, Taipei, Taiwan: Zheng-Wen Publication, 1998, 37.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.



expressed in individual and collective ethical discipline. Yinshun emphasises that this obedience requires observance of the Dharma in spirit as well as in external practice, by which Buddhists live Bodhisattva's exemplary compassion for all living things.<sup>60</sup> It is these three elements that Yinshun identifies as the unchanging core of the Dharma. Everything else, including the focus on self-release from this world's suffering, the integration of Buddhas and heavenly deities, and the belief in supernatural powers, are seen as products of particular contexts that should not be regarded as essential to Buddhism and that should therefore be disregarded from Taiwanese Buddhist practice.

### **The Contents of 'Humanistic Buddhism'**

In his writings, Yinshun often quotes a passage from the Ekottaragama Suttas (增壹阿含經): 'All Buddhas are originated from the human world and no one attains Nirvāṇa in heaven.'<sup>61</sup> This passage, he confesses, inspired him early in his exploration of the essence of the Dharma and is also the primary source of his 'Humanistic Buddhism.' His concept of 'Humanistic Buddhism' can be summarised in stating: The best way to attain Nirvāṇa is to follow the example of Śākyamuni Buddha, who, through the Bodhisattva path, attains Nirvāṇa in the world we live. Based on this concept, the details of Yinshun's thoughts will be described below.

#### **Buddha Is in This Human World (佛在人間)**

The first principle of 'Humanistic Buddhism' rests on the belief that Śākyamuni achieved Nirvāṇa as a human being in this impure world. Yinshun claims that as the first historical figure who became a Buddha in this world, Śākyamuni is the figure that offers the only reliable example for all Buddhists to follow.<sup>62</sup> In describing Śākyamuni's example, Yinshun excludes the mysterious and miraculous elements attributed to Śākyamuni in the Buddhist tradition, and emphasises that the value of his example derives from the fact that he was an ordinary man who, like all other mortals, lived a human life. Śākyamuni suffered from bodily illness and had to struggle against everyday temptations. The remarkable characteristics of his life were not his supernatural substance or miraculous power but his sensitive consciousness of the suffering of life, his courage in abandoning his inherited royalty, his perseverance in conquering temptation, and his wisdom in comprehending the Dharma. It was through

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>61</sup> The Chinese text is: '諸佛皆出人間, 終不在天上成佛也.'

<sup>62</sup> Yinshun, *Buddha in Human World*, rev. ed., Taipei, Taiwan: Zheng-Wen Publication, 2000, 23-24.

such endurance that he overcame the obstacles of this impure world and finally achieved his enlightenment under the Bodhy trees.

After his enlightenment, Śākyamuni refused to immediately enter Nirvāṇa and continued living in this impure world. His purpose was to save all living beings from suffering and to establish the way of compassion through propagating the Dharma.<sup>63</sup> Thus, he continued on for forty-three years post-enlightenment, until he finally departed this world entering Nirvāṇa forever. The precious thing he left in this world was the Dharma. In this manner, Yinshun presents Śākyamuni as a person whose human achievement provides an example for others to follow. People should learn his teachings and follow his example, but should not overly exalt him as a deity.

According to Yinshun, it was not until after Śākyamuni's death that some of his followers, in their grief, began attributing him with supernatural elements. This ability was evident in the later sutras that attested to his miraculous power to save people, and exhorted them to worship his relics.<sup>64</sup> From this, came the idea that Śākyamuni did not really attain enlightenment in this impure world but in heaven, and that his historical deeds might just be illusory.<sup>65</sup> As Yinshun puts it: 'Buddha was raised to the heaven.'<sup>66</sup> He therefore emphasises that 'Buddha is in the human world,' through which he seeks a return to Buddha as a human figure, ridding Buddhism of its supernaturalism.

#### The Uniqueness of the Human Being (人身難得)

The second feature of Yinshun's 'Humanistic Buddhism' is his insistence on the unique value of the human being, evident in two respects. First, human beings possess unique characteristics that raise them above the level of other creatures.<sup>67</sup> Primary among these is reason (憶念勝) that enables people to think.<sup>68</sup> The highest exercise of reason lies in the human capability to sense the suffering of this world, to seek a solution to human problems, and to comprehend the Dharma. In addition to reason, human beings are uniquely endowed with conscience (梵行勝),<sup>69</sup> giving human beings the senses of guilt, repentance and empathy. Conscience is therefore the basis of morality and compassion. The third attribute distinguishing the superiority of

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 1-12.

<sup>64</sup> Yinshun, *The Origin and Development of Early Mahāyāna Buddhism* (初期大乘佛教的起源和發展), Taipei, Taiwan: Zheng-Wen Publication, 1994, 43-97.

<sup>65</sup> Yinshun, *Buddha in Human World*, rev. ed., Taipei, Taiwan: Zheng-Wen Publication, 2000, 14.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 78-80.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 89-90.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 90-93.

human beings is endurance (勇猛勝).<sup>70</sup> If reason gives human beings the wisdom to set a goal for life, and conscience grants the means to attain it morally, endurance is the unique ability to face and to overcome all obstacles that impede the realisation of this goal. It is the combination of these three faculties - reason, conscience, and endurance - that endow human beings uniquely with the potential to conquer all difficulties and to attain Nirvāṇa.

Human uniqueness leads to the fact that only humans can possibly attain Nirvāṇa. Yinshun asserts that although there are six realms in the traditional Buddhist cosmology, and although abiding in heaven and in devas' realms can provide abundant bliss, only human beings are capable of realising the Dharma to attain Nirvāṇa.<sup>71</sup> In support of this argument, Yinshun notes that in the earlier sutras it is only human beings that have the right to hear the preaching of the Dharma, and the creatures dwelling in the realms of heaven and devas are not so qualified. In general, Yinshun wants to emphasise the uniqueness of human beings so as to help people appreciate their singularity in this regard while rejecting the idea of divine realms and miraculous affairs, in order to encourage people to practice the Dharma in this world.

#### Attaining Nirvāṇa through the Bodhisattva Path (行菩薩道成佛)

Yinshun contends that of all the Buddhist practices the Bodhisattva path represents the best way for rationally and morally capable human beings to attain Nirvāṇa. In the Buddhist tradition, its practices can be divided into three main paths: the path of wisdom (解), of devotion (信), and of compassion (行). Of these three, Yinshun's teaches that the Bodhisattva path sets forth the way of compassion as the one most closely expresses the essence of Dharma. This path is hard, but the fastest. It is one that human beings can follow through their power of endurance to attain Nirvāṇa.<sup>72</sup>

The Bodhisattva is one who stays in the impure world and shares in the suffering of the people. The Bodhisattva shows compassion for all living beings and vows to save them from the suffering. By following the path of compassion, a Bodhisattva can eventually attain Nirvāṇa. Yinshun's argument is that the real origin of Bodhisattva concept lies in the example of Śākyamuni's life, leading to the emphasis that the Bodhisattvas are very human rather than heavenly deities. This correlates with his

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 93-94.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>72</sup> Yinshun, *Pure Land and Chan (淨土與禪)*, rev. ed., Taipei, Taiwan: Zheng-Wen Publication, 1995, 68-74.

insistence on the humanity of Śākyamuni, the original Bodhisattva, whose example other human beings can emulate in their own lives, in contrast to the concept of deified Bodhisattvas who leaves human beings dependent on a belief in external salvation.<sup>73</sup>

Yinshun's interpretation of the Bodhisattva path is different from that of the Chinese Buddhist tradition. With an accentuation on the deism of Bodhisattvas, Chinese Buddhists believe that one first becomes a Bodhisattva through meditative practices, and then later assumes the Bodhisattva's ministry of the salvation of the living. This concept is problematic in that, unless one first becomes a Bodhisattva, good deeds are only meritorious and are therefore in a secondary place in Buddhist practice. Yinshun is of the view that every ordinary person can vow to practice the Bodhisattva path, thereby permitting, good deeds and merciful acts to become popular Buddhist practice.

The reason why Yinshun believes that the Bodhisattva path most closely fits the essence of the Dharma is that he sees it to be the way of overcoming human craving, the origin of human suffering. According to the Four Noble Truths, the absence of craving is the way to eliminate suffering and attain Nirvāṇa. Yinshun emphasises that human craving arises from the human desire of self-possession (我執), and thus, the way to cease craving is to vanquish the desire of self-possession. This is achieved through the Bodhisattva path, not by passively keeping oneself from this world, but by positive worldly participation and the care for those who are suffering therein.

The comprehensive process of the Bodhisattva path is too complex to discuss here. But the following features constitute, according to Yinshun, its essential elements while simultaneously characterising 'Humanistic Buddhism.' First, a Bodhisattva is one who does not reject the reality of human troubles and sufferings, but is one who chooses to conquer them. Bodhisattvas do not choose to abandon the impure world, but to remain in it in order to struggle against its impurities. Second, Bodhisattvas do not eagerly seek to attain Nirvāṇa for themselves, but focus on the interests of others. They acquire enlightenment by benefiting others. They eagerly perform good deeds, not to accumulate merit for themselves but for the benefit of others. Third, Bodhisattvas are those who do not live a life of withdrawal from this world but, whether monastic members or lay people, live in a participatory way in it.

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<sup>73</sup> Yinshun, 'Humanistic Buddhism—A Concept that Express the Essence of Buddhism and Is Suitable for Contemporary Context,' in *Collections of Magnificent Rain*, V4, Taipei, Taiwan: Zheng-Wen Publication, 1998, 39-42.

# Establishing the Pure Land in the Human World (建立人間淨土)

Yinshun claims that the ministry of a Bodhisattva is to help to establish a human Pure Land, where all living beings can dwell happily and practice the Dharma. He agrees with the Pure Land School in viewing the Pure Land through the lens of human hope for an ideal world, contrary to the imperfections of the actual world.<sup>74</sup> Yinshun argues that the Pure Land established in a distant, other world was developed in the later Mahāyāna period, and marked a departure from the original essence of the Dharma. In proof of this, he relies upon two references made about the Pure Land in the early sutras.

The first describes the Pure Land as a this-worldly reality, where the land is ruled by the Cakravartin, the Sage King, not militarily, but by way of the Dharma. This kingdom of the Sage King is a place of prosperity, peace, and benevolence. Its inhabitants are able to practise the Dharma and to attain Nirvāṇa easily. However, the earthly Pure Land ruled by the Sage King is not the complete fulfillment of the Pure Land. The true Pure Land will only be fulfilled in the coming of Maitreya (彌勒), the successor of Śākyamuni.<sup>75</sup> According to the Maitreya Vyākaraṇa Sūtra (彌勒下生經), complete fulfillment of the Pure Land is a future reality. After the establishment of the earthly Pure Land through the Sage King's ruling and the population's efforts, Maitreya will come down from Tuṣita (兜率天), a heavenly and blissful realm, and succeed Śākyamuni to become Buddha of this world. It is the combination of the rule of the Sage King, the contribution of all people, and the teaching of Maitreya that will eventually and completely fulfill a real Pure Land in this world.

Without commenting on the historicity of these references, Yinshun relies on them as a means of inspiring people in this world to build a Pure Land within the parameters of human history. According to Yinshun's interpretation, the period of the Sage King could be identified in several periods of India and Chinese history, such as the period of King Aśoka (reigning around 272-232 BCE) in Indian, Sui Wendi (隋文帝, 541-604 CE), Tang Empress Wu (武則天, 624-705 CE), and Ming Tai Tsu (明太祖, 1328-1398 CE) in China, in whom Yinshun saw the potential of establishing the Pure Land as an empirical reality, though each eventually failed.

The two sutra references show that the real fulfillment of the Pure Land should include three characteristics. The first is that the Pure Land should be in this world

<sup>74</sup> Yinshun, *The Origin and Development of Early Mahāyāna Buddhism*, Taipei, Taiwan: Zheng-Wen Publication, 1994, 808.

<sup>75</sup> Yinshun, *Pure Land and Chan*, rev. ed., Taipei, Taiwan: Zheng-Wen Publication, 1995, 16-18.



rather than the external. The second holds that people are expected to participate in the establishment of this Pure Land. The third is this establishment should be the common goal of all Buddhists. Yinshun applies this teaching of a this-worldly Pure Land to Taiwan. He does not address Taiwanese society in political terms, but clearly presents an understanding of the Pure Land that is contrary to the traditional Pure Land School withdrawal from this world. In so doing, he has laid the theoretical foundation, in which Taiwanese Buddhist activists are able to engage directly their suffering world, presenting a positive vision of a human Pure Land that embraces the eternal principles of the Dharma all the while seeking the transformation of human society.

### **The Assessment of Yinshun's Thinking**

#### **The Comparison of Two Contrary Systems**

Amitābha Pure Land belief and Yinshun's 'Humanistic Buddhism' today represent two main communities of Taiwanese Buddhism. On certain elements of Buddhist faith they are in agreement, as both seek Nirvāṇa as the human final destiny. They also agree on the basic Buddhist concepts of Nirvāṇa, the Four Noble Truths, and the Eight-Fold Path. They both agree that this human world is an impure land, full of sufferings and troubles and both propose a practical religious goal, which is to seek an ideal world, a Pure Land.

Yet despite these commonalities, they actually represent two contrary Buddhist systems in Taiwan. The critical divergent in their viewpoints relates to the present world of empirical human existence. Both regard it as impure; but as Amitābha Pure Land belief deals with this impurity by opting to withdraw from this world, 'Humanistic Buddhism' opts to remain in this world and attempts to transform it. Related to this fundamental difference are their divergent understandings of the release from suffering and the attainment of Nirvāṇa. Amitābha Pure Land proposes that suffering is ended through bodily isolation from the causes of suffering in this world by entering into an ideal realm, whose inhabitants are free from earthly troubles. 'Humanistic Buddhism', on the other hand, sees the manner of release from this world to be that of the Bodhisattva path, whose followers mentally rise above earthly suffering while maintaining the bodily struggle against its causes. Amitābha Pure Land teaches a passive cessation of human craving as the way towards the elimination of suffering, while 'Humanistic Buddhism' teaches an active way of living compassion for others that eliminates self-possessive desire.

These divergent interpretations of fundamental Buddhist concepts result in



different practical applications of Buddhist teaching. Amitābha Pure Land encourages the withdrawal from this world in favour of rebirth in the very distant Pure Land, relieving its followers of the duty to pursue the path of compassion. The choice of 'Humanistic Buddhism' to stay in this world results in a highest priority being given to the path of compassion by participating in this world and caring for the benefit of others. The two movements set their ideal world in different places: the Pure Land School looks to a distant other world, utterly distinct qualitatively from this world; 'Humanistic Buddhism' believes that the ideal Pure Land can be achieved in this world. Amitābha Pure Land disregards the value of this life and cares only for the ultimate destiny of human beings, while 'Humanistic Buddhism' believes it is very possible to fulfill human destiny through day-to-day compassion.

### Some Issues Awaiting Further Exploration

Although Yinshun's 'Humanistic Buddhism' offers a transformed reinterpretation of Chinese Buddhist tradition, his thinking contains some problems that should be noted. As he repeatedly states, his 'Humanistic Buddhism' is intended to both express the essence of Buddhism and apply it contextually in Taiwan. His current influence among Taiwanese Buddhists suggests that he has achieved significant success in the second goal. However, his proposal about the real essence of Buddhism awaits further analysis. He also recognises that his teaching is based on the 'hard path' of self-effort that affirms the highest ideals and requires the highest standards of human achievement. Accordingly, his thoughts are often criticised as being too idealistic and in neglect of the needs of ordinary people.<sup>76</sup> This raises the question of whether his 'Humanistic Buddhism', though popular today, is capable of retaining popular appeal. This question becomes more pressing since Yinshun's work concentrates on the realm of doctrinal exploration, yet lacks comparable attention to the implementation of practical strategies.

### Yinshun's Thinking--Theoretical Foundation for Buddhist Social Engagement

Notwithstanding these criticisms, there is no doubt that Yinshun has succeeded in offering, at the theoretical level, the vision of a transformed Taiwanese Buddhism that positively engages in this world rather than withdrawing from it in the manner of

<sup>76</sup> Jiang, Chanteng, *The Factors of the Discrepancy between Taixu and Yinshun in Their Interpretations to 'Humanistic Buddhism'* (論印順法師與太虛大師對人間佛教詮釋各異的原因) in *Essays on Modern Chinese Thought* (現代中國佛教思想論集), Taipei, Taiwan: Shin Wen Feng Publication, 1990, 153.

traditional Pure Land belief. His 'Humanistic Buddhism' turns Buddhist attention to the human world and revives the spirit of Bodhisattva compassion for living beings. Yinshun is the first scholar in the Taiwanese context to lay the doctrinal foundation for the socialised understanding of the Pure Land as a reality that can be achieved in this world.

### **The Practical Actions of 'Humanistic Buddhism'**

Since the 1980s, Buddhism has asserted itself with a new vigour in Taiwan. Many Buddhist institutions have thrown themselves into charity, social concern and even political movements. Their social engagement not only contributes to the whole of society, but also augments the number of followers. Many modern Taiwanese Buddhist leaders and scholars suggest that these socially engaged movements are the legacy of Taixu and were based by Yinshun's thinking. The positive approach of 'Humanistic Buddhism' in participating in Taiwanese society has resonated in its influence among Taiwanese Buddhists. Establishing a 'Humanistic Buddhism' and a Pure Land in this world have now become missions in three of the four Buddhist complexes.<sup>77</sup> The leaders of these three complexes mentioned that their ministries are in some way influenced by Taixu or Yinshun.<sup>78</sup> Other applications of 'Humanistic Buddhism' can be seen in the growing Buddhist concern for human rights, ecology, and the purification of human hearts. The following paragraphs of this section will introduce the practical ministries of 'Humanistic Buddhism' from five aspects and see how these actions reveal their humanistic characteristics.

### **Caring for the Underprivileged through Charity and Medical Works**

Chapter Two mentioned that, since traditional Taiwanese Buddhism considered acts of charity as just meritorious in acquiring a better reincarnation without direct effects for attaining Nirvāṇa, these charity works have not been their major concerns. This condition has changed recently as lots of Buddhist institutions have devoted themselves to the care for underprivileged people through charitable and medical ministries. Among these institutes, Tzuchi started this wave and plays a leading role. Its ministries of caring for the underprivileged have even become a symbol of the Buddhist social movement and its development is considered 'miracle' in Taiwan.

<sup>77</sup> Three of these complexes include Tzuchi Merit Society (慈濟功德會), Dharma Drum Mountain (法鼓山), and Buddha Light Mountain (佛光山).

<sup>78</sup> Don A. Pittman, *Towards a Modern Chinese Buddhism, Taixu's Reforms*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001, 277, 288.

Master Chengyen played a crucial role in the ministries of Tzuchi. She founded the ministry in 1966 CE because of a challenge from three Catholic nuns and of an experience when seeing a sick tribal woman rejected by a hospital because of being unable to pay the security deposit for surgery. She started by collecting money to help those in poverty and affected by disaster. Because of her inspirational teachings and merciful example, more and more people devoted themselves to Tzuchi's ministry. It gradually developed into four tasks - charity, medicine care, education, and culture. Recently, the charity was expanded to international disaster relief. This organisation has to date, at least four million members, who regularly donate money for Tzuchi's charity works or who volunteer to serve in nursing homes, orphanages, and Tzuchi's related hospitals.

The factors that enabled Tzuchi to develop into such a splendid and successful ministry are Chengyen's charismatic influence and her new perspective on good deeds and charitable works, very in tune with those of Yinshun. Chengyen shifts the focus on good deeds away from merit-making to the practice of the Bodhisattva path as the way towards self-reformation. The latter direction will be described in the subsequent paragraph. For the former, unlike the traditional concept of the Bodhisattva path, which claims that the status of Bodhisattva is attained through meditation first and then good deeds are practiced after becoming a Bodhisattva, she claims that the Bodhisattva path, which means caring for and helping underprivileged people, is the most superior path of practicing the Dharma.<sup>79</sup> This emphasises the value of charity and good deeds consequently encouraging Buddhists to pay attention to the practice of compassion.

### **The Transformation of Corrupt Human Conscience and Social Customs**

The second task of 'Humanistic Buddhism' is the active participation in the transforming the current chaotic and impure situation in Taiwan. Unlike traditional Buddhism, the establishment of a Pure Land in this world is the common ministry of 'Humanistic Buddhism.' Facing the difficult reality in achieving this mission due to the current social chaotic, the concept that 'those, whose minds are pure, see this buddha-field as perfectly pure' in 'The Holy Teaching of Vimalakirti'<sup>80</sup> becomes their

<sup>79</sup> Lu Huisheng (盧蕙馨), *The Characteristics of Tzuchi's Modern 'Non-Temple Based' Buddhism* (佛教慈濟功德會「非寺廟中心」的現代佛教特性) in *Essays of Temples and Popular Culture's Conference* (寺廟與民間文化研討會論文集), Taipei, Taiwan: Council for Cultural Affairs, Executive Yuan (行政院文化建設委員), 1994, 730.

<sup>80</sup> The English texts are quoted from Robert A. F. Thurman trans., *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti: A*

common conviction of establishing the Pure Land. This concept is interpreted from dually. The first interpretation is deciding whether or not a pure world by our human senses. If the world in our eyes is impure, this is because our minds are impure. When our mind is pure, this world is pure. The second, which is closer to the Pure Land movement, is that the foundation for establishing a Pure Land in the current chaotic situation of Taiwan is through the purification of the human heart. As Master Shinyun (星雲法師) claims in his lecture,<sup>81</sup> many humanistic Buddhists believe that Buddhist belief is the best medium for people to acquire inner purification. This conviction directs many Buddhist institutions in focusing their ministries on the purification of human hearts by propagating Buddhist beliefs and spreading the teachings on cultivating inner virtues and moral conducts.

This basic conviction is achieved in different ways by different organisations. The foregoing paragraph has indicated that Tzuchi attempts to purify human hearts in practicing good deeds. There are numerous examples in Tzuchi's publications indicating how their volunteers experience personal transformation through charitable works and caring services.<sup>82</sup> Alternatively one is through meditation. Many Chan Buddhist institutions, such as The Dharma Drum Mountain and The Middle Taiwan Chan Temple, consider meditation a useful tool to help modern people to acquire wisdom, and then to achieve mental and even physical transformation. They claim that personal transformation is the source of the social reformation and they therefore hold numerous programmes of meditative practices. Participating in these meditative activities has become a popular religious activity in Taiwan. Others propagate the Dharma through media and publications. Many Buddhist institutions consider the media the most efficient way to spread Buddhist belief and have since invested large amounts of money towards establishing TV and Radio channels, producing Buddhist programmes, and publishing a plenty of literary and electronic media. These media and publications have spread many ethical teachings to encourage people to live moral lives, and they have acted as a medium in encouraging people's conversion to

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*Mahāyāna Scripture*, University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976, 18. Its Chinese text is: '隨其心淨, 則佛國土淨' from Master Shengyen, *Pure Land in the Human World* (人間淨土), Taipei, Taiwan: Dharma Drum Mountain Cultural and Educational Fund (法鼓山文化教育基金會), 2000, 33.

<sup>81</sup> Shinyun (星雲法師), *Humanistic Buddhism* (人間佛教), Kaohsiung, Taiwan: Buddha Light Publishing, (佛光出版社) 1995, 189-191.

<sup>82</sup> Lu Huishong, *The Characteristics of Tzuchi's Modern "Non-Temple Based" Buddhism in Essays of Temples and Popular Culture's Conference*, Taipei, Taiwan: Council for Cultural Affairs, Executive Yuan, 1994, 734-740.

Buddhism. In addition, many Buddhist institutions see the importance of training highly educated Buddhists to join the monastic classes that can effectively take the responsibility of propagating the Dharma, and therefore can help the reformation of the society and the expansion of Buddhism. They invest lots of money in establishing universities and Buddhist colleges, and in sending academically distinguished monks and nuns overseas to receive advanced Buddhist education.

In all, the evidence presented shows that Humanistic Buddhists has made great efforts towards the purification of the human heart and social customs. It is hard to evaluate the effects of their efforts in changing the chaotic situation of Taiwan. However, their works do depict their concern for the establishment of an ideal world and their confidence that Buddhist belief can provide this social reformation.

### **Environmental Protection**

The third prominent task of establishing a Pure Land in this world is by the protection of the environment and living beings. This work pertains to the Buddhist belief that the purity of environment is one element of Buddhist concept of Pure Land, coupled with Buddhist concern about Taiwan's ecological ruin, which is due to aggressive economic development. The early movements of environmental protection were limited in their focus to activities like recycling advocacy and tree-plantings. Propagating the concept of environmental protection also becomes the main ministry in some institutions. In terms of protecting the living beings, advocating a new perspective on the traditional Buddhist concept of 'the release of captured animals' (放生) was an important task early on. However, these works were restricted to individual events, without a consideration of the inherent structural ecological problems.

Since the 1990s, the establishment of a Buddhist theory of ecological ethics received broad attention when it was discussed in related conferences. This task of establishing Buddhist environmental ethics is relatively new and still awaits further exploration. Currently, the theoretical foundation of Buddhist ecological ethics is established mainly on the Buddhist concept of *pratītya-samutpāda* (緣起, dependent origin).<sup>83</sup> Since all things in this universe are related to each other, it is important for human beings to show compassion and protection of all the living beings in the universe. Recent Buddhist works of ecological protection have also started to give

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<sup>83</sup> Lin Chaocheng (林朝成), *The Dimensions and Consideration of Taiwanese Humanistic Buddhist Environmental Discussion* (台灣人間佛教環境論述的面向和省思), *Contemporary*, 173, November 2002, 59.



attention to structural environmental problems, such as political appeals against air and water pollution in industrial areas, participation in the anti movement nuclear power, and the protection of the rights and dignity of animals. Ecological concern in 'Humanistic Buddhism' has therefore entered a new dimension, but this activism is still just getting underway.

### Social and Political Actions

A socially engaged Buddhist movement cannot avoid involving itself in the political affairs of society. Some Humanistic Buddhists have thus expressed their concern for the political climate in Taiwan. In the Nationalist period, some Taiwanese Buddhists took on political roles in the service of the government with the government granting some honourable government or ruling party positions to Buddhist leaders. However, after the lifting of Martial Law, Buddhist participation in politics began to vary. There are some Buddhist institutions directly involved in supporting certain candidates or parties in elections. This backing not only draws steep criticism, but election results show that Buddhist leaders endorsement of candidates does not influence the votes of Buddhist constituents. Yang Huinan cites a public opinion poll during the general election in 1989 CE, showing that only 7.1% of Buddhists elect political candidates according to the instruction of the temples and masters.<sup>84</sup> There were also some Buddhist institutions advocating a clear political standpoint such as seeking the independence or self-determination of Taiwan.

Besides becoming directly involved elections, some Buddhist institution, without taking a specific political standpoint, also actively participate in social and political appeals, such as the movement legalised gambling, support for the 2-28 victims' actions, and the abolishment of the death penalty. Although there were some Buddhist institutions involved in politics in Taiwan, according to the study of Yang Huinan, these events are few and most of the Buddhists distance themselves from political affairs.<sup>85</sup> Besides, these political concerns cannot avoid a confrontation in the discrepancy of political standpoint between different organisations, like the issue Taiwanese independence, which can arouse tensions between different groups. On this

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<sup>84</sup> Yang Huinan, *The Phenomenon and Characteristics of New Taiwanese Buddhism after the End of Martial Law: A Study Centred on 'Humanistic Buddhism'* (解嚴後台灣新興佛教現象及其特質: 以人間佛教為中心的一個考察) in *The Phenomenon of Taiwanese New Religions and the Study of their Related Issues* (台灣新興宗教現象及其相關問題之研究), Chiu Heiyuan ed., Taipei, Taiwan: School of Social Study, Academia Sinica (中央研究院社會研究所), 2002, 200.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.



issue in particular majority of the Buddhist institutions oppose Taiwan's independence. In all, these movements display that the traditional Buddhist position of political avoidance of staying away from gradually beginning to change.

### **The Inter-Buddhist Reformation**

The close interaction between the society and Humanistic Buddhism has brought about a reformation within Buddhist institutions. These reformations primarily include the transformation of organisation's structures and daily activities. Using Tzuchi as an example, Lu Huishong indicates that it has changed from a traditional Buddhist temple-based format to a mission-driven basis in its institutional structure, from a meditation and chanting focus to the activity-focus in its regular programmes, and from a tendency to renounce this world to a socially-engaged one.<sup>86</sup> Although the monastic class still plays the leading role in Buddhist institutions and temples, lay people have begun to play a greater part in the operation and advocacy of ministries.

A prominent reformation is displayed in the challenge of the traditional view on the position of nuns and lay females in Buddhism. The influence of female Buddhists in the mission of 'Humanistic Buddhism' and the feminism in Taiwanese society brought about the reconsideration of the Buddhist Vinaya regarding the equality of and the interaction between nuns and monks. Some nuns such as Hengching and Huiyang have mildly expressed in their writings their discontent about the inequality in the monastery.<sup>87</sup> Chaohui is the one who transformed this discontent into open actions. In the Academic Conference of the Theory and Practice of Reverend Yinshun's Thinking (印順導師思想之理論與實踐研討會) in 2001 CE, she asked some Buddhist leaders and scholars to abolish the Buddhist 'eight vows of respect' (八敬法), a Vinaya rule concerning nuns' subordination to the order of monks. This revolutionary action aroused strong criticism and fierce arguments within Taiwanese Buddhism.<sup>88</sup> These reformations of the traditional Buddhist system show that a close interaction between

<sup>86</sup> Lu Huishong, *The Characteristics of Tzuchi's Modern 'Non-Temple Based' Buddhism in Essays of Temples and Popular Culture's Conference*, Taipei, Taiwan: Council for Cultural Affairs, Executive Yuan, 1994, 745.

<sup>87</sup> See Hengching, *Women of Virtues on the Bodhisattva Path* (菩提道上的善女人), Taipei, Taiwan: Dongdah Books, 1995; and Huiyang, *Buddhist View on Female* (佛教的女性觀) in *Humanistic View on the Thinking of Pure Land* (從人間性看淨土思想), Kaohsiung, Taiwan: Chunhui Publishing, 2000, 133-150.

<sup>88</sup> Chaohui compiles some of these arguments, which are mostly her responses to the critics, to the books, Shi Chaohui and Shi Xingguang (釋性廣) ed., *The Intonation for Thousands of Years: Buddhist Female Perspective in the New Age* (千載沉吟: 新世紀的佛教女性思維), Taipei, Taiwan: Fajie Publishing (台北台灣: 法界出版社), 2001.

‘Humanistic Buddhism’ and society also leaves an impact on Taiwanese Buddhism.

### **Conclusion—Actions of ‘Establishing a Pure Land in This World’**

This overall direction towards a Pure Land is not only presented in ‘Establishing a Pure Land in This World’, which is being claimed by many Humanistic Buddhist organisations as the goals of their ministries, but also in their ministerial reflections on the elements of the Buddhist concept of Pure Land. Based on the portrayal of the three Scriptures and one larger discourse in the Pure Land School, Yinshun categorises the state of a Pure Land into four features. In the ministries of ‘Humanistic Buddhism,’ the reformation of human hearts and social customs through propagation of the Dharma are responses to the purification of human heart. Various charity works being performed to improve the state of underprivileged people, and social and political actions help to construct a society that improves people’s physical and mental wellbeing. Environmental protection is meant to fulfill the goal of purifying the environment. These actions all provide supporting evidence that are consistent with Yinshun’s theory of actively participating in the reformation of this world and the goal of establishing a Buddhist ideal world, a Pure Land, in this world.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has portrayed the transformation of Taiwanese Buddhism from its traditional stance of worldly renunciation to the new teaching of reforming human society by making the Pure Land a reality in this world. The seeds of this movement were sown by Taixu and it was given theoretical elaboration in the work of Yinshun. It has been on the basis of their writings that the Humanistic Buddhist movement has, since the 1980s, changed the traditional image of Chinese Buddhism to make it a dynamic force in contemporary Taiwanese society.

It can fairly be concluded from this analysis that the ‘Humanistic Buddhism’ incorporates many characteristics of Chinese culture in its beliefs and practices. The ethical value of altruism that is characteristic of Chinese Confucianism corresponds with the emphasis on the compassionate practice of the Buddha and following the path of the Bodhisattva that form the core of ‘Humanistic Buddhism.’ This correspondence is confirmed in practice by the devotion with which many Taiwanese Buddhists commit themselves to social service among their fellow human beings. The analysis of ‘Humanistic Buddhism’ has also made clear that social services that seek to improve human society are the ethical expression of an inward concern for the purification of

the human 'heart' as the seat of spiritual and moral integrity. This spiritual dynamic of 'Humanistic Buddhism' finds its equivalent in the Confucian metaphysics of Tien/Dao as that power that transforms the earth. The Humanistic Buddhist commitment to reforming the morality and social behaviour of Taiwanese society reflects this same concern for high moral attainment.<sup>89</sup> Humanistic Buddhism's rejection of other-worldly tendencies, and its teaching that the Pure Land can be established in this world corresponds with Confucian concepts of purifying this world in the image of Tien/Dao, and may suggest one reason for the widespread popular acceptance of the numerous social-outreach activities of Humanistic Buddhist institutes. It is clear, therefore, that as 'Humanistic Buddhism' is transforming Taiwanese traditional Buddhism into a dynamic movement of humanistic and ethical concern, it is responding to deep-seated values in Chinese culture. Some Buddhist scholars themselves acknowledge this fact. Yang Huinan and Lu Huishong, for instance, point out that, although there is no direct evidence showing that Humanistic Buddhist beliefs have been directly influenced by Confucianism, the parallels between them are significant and cannot be ignored.<sup>90</sup>

It is also evident that there has been a large increase in the numbers of Taiwanese who adhere to Buddhism since the rise of the Humanistic Buddhist movement. Although the connection between these two phenomena has not been scientifically studied, it appears to the present researcher that they are related, if not directly, at least in that 'Humanistic Buddhism' clearly responds to needs within Taiwanese culture. This empowers 'Humanistic Buddhism' to make significant contributions to contemporary Taiwanese society, and in the judgement of this researcher, begins to eliminate some of the impediments that have obstructed Christian-Buddhist dialogue in the past. The findings of this chapter therefore confirm the fifth hypothesis of this thesis: that the contemporary influence of 'Humanistic Buddhism' shows that Taiwanese Buddhism is in the process of transforming itself from renunciation of this

<sup>89</sup> This kind of teaching is popular in Shinyun, Chengyen, and Shengyen. See Shinyun (星雲法師), *Humanistic Buddhism* (人間佛教), Kaohsiung, Taiwan: Buddha Light Publishing, (佛光出版社) 1995; Shengyen, *The Dharma Drum Record by Master Shengyen 9 聖嚴法師法鼓集*, Lin Qingxuan ed. (林清玄主編), Taipei, Taiwan: Jiuge Publishing (九歌出版社), 1991; and Chengyen, *Buddhist Priestess Chengyen's Meditation* (證嚴法師靜思語), Taipei, Taiwan: Jiuge Publishing, 1991.

<sup>90</sup> See Yang Huinan, *The Place of Confucianism in Master Yinshun's Humanistic Buddhism* (儒家在印順導師之人間佛教中的地位), in *The Expectation of Contemporary Buddhist Beliefs*, Taipei, Taiwan: Dongdah Books, 1991, 221-270; and Lu Huishong, *The Moral Significance of Tzuchi Merits and Virtues Foundation* (台灣佛教慈濟功德會的道德意義), Zhuchi Research and Development Center, Taipei, Taiwan, 25.

world to the reform of human society in the image of the Pure Land, and that this creates new opportunities for dialogue between Taiwanese Buddhists and like-minded Taiwanese Christians.

## Chapter Six

### The Actualisation of the Kingdom of God in This World—The Contextual Movement of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

#### Introduction

As Chapter Five showed that the contemporary teaching of 'Humanistic Buddhism' re-orientated many Taiwanese Buddhists to a consensus that the Pure Land can be realised in this world, and has thus contributed to a new contextualisation of Taiwanese Buddhism in relation to the humanistic ideals of Chinese culture, this chapter explores the development of contextual theology among Taiwanese Protestant Christianity. It asks similar questions of Taiwanese Protestants asked of Taiwanese Buddhists in the previous chapter: does the Taiwanese Protestant understanding of the Kingdom of God relate to the actual social needs of the Taiwanese people, and does a Taiwanese contextual understanding of God's Kingdom address the humanistic values of Chinese culture? To the degree that affirmative answers can be given to these questions, the hypothesis can be confirmed that the contemporary contextual movement of Taiwanese Protestantism parallels the emergence of 'Humanistic Buddhism,' and invites a 'humanistic' dialogue of social action with Taiwanese Buddhism that can enhance the quality of the Protestant contextual movement by including the inter-religious dimension.

Since the 1970s a contextual movement<sup>1</sup> has risen in the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (PCT) within the framework of a series of political statements that the Church published in relation to the democratisation movement in Taiwan. Making these statements that placed the PCT under government suspicion, leading Taiwanese Presbyterian theologians recognised the need to develop a theological justification for the church's position, both to respond to government pressure and to answer criticisms raised by fellow Christians. This was the genesis of Taiwanese contextual theology that developed around several themes: 'identification (認同)' in the sense of the church identifying itself positively with the history and people of Taiwan; 'homeland (鄉土)' emphasising Taiwan's distinction from China as the divinely-gifted land in

<sup>1</sup> In interviews and writings, PCT's theologians normally call this movement and theological development '本土化' or '本土神學,' which is directly translated as 'nativilisation' and 'native theology.' In English, they like to name this theological development 'Contextual Theology', which might be adopted to declare the influence of Shoki Coe's thinking, though the meanings of PCT's 'native theology' are not completely the same as Coe's concept of contextualisation. To respect the original usage of PCT's theologians, this thesis adopts 'contextual theology' and 'contextual movement' to name PCT's native theology and movement here.

which the Church finds its local character; 'the Kingdom of God' that can be realised locally in the homeland of Taiwan; and '*Chhut Thau Thi* (出頭天),' literally 'one raises one's head' in the sense of 'self-determination (自決).' These four themes provided the theoretical groundwork for Taiwanese contextual theology since the 1970s, and gave the PCT a renewed understanding of mission as 'the Actualisation of the Kingdom of God in This World' (實現上帝國在地上), as the PCT's mission programme came to be called. This contextual theology marked a transformation from the Church's traditional focus on personal salvation to the salvation of the whole society, in which the mission of the Church was now being identified with its homeland, in which it was called by God to care for the future of all Taiwanese people.

This chapter will explore the development of this contextual movement, examining its historical origins, the content of its political statements and theological justification, and its ongoing development through two mission initiatives, 'the Mission of Kingdom of God' (1994) and 'the Mission in 21<sup>st</sup> Century' (1999). It will be argued that this contextual theology positively answers the research question that underlie this chapter, demonstrating that it positively relates the Kingdom of God to the needs of this world in the contemporary Taiwanese homeland, in which humanistic values of social wellbeing spring from a centuries-old Chinese culture.

This chapter draws primarily from three sources. The official records of the PCT's political statements, the Confession of Faith that was adopted by the Presbyterian General Assembly of 1986 CE, and the publications of the two mission projects mentioned above are the main sources of the contents of this contextual movement. In addition, the PCT's historical records, oral descriptions of the PCT's leaders and historians through interviews, and theologian's publications on these statements and mission projects help to understand the context of this contextual movement. Lastly, the writings of PCT theologians have been consulted, especially those of Wang Hsienchih, Huang Poho, and Chen Nanzhou, each of which gives a clear exposition on this contextual theology.

### **Historical Section of PCT's Contextual Movement**

#### **Historical Periods of PCT's Contextualisation**

The PCT's contextual movement was gradually formulated during different periods of the PCT's history. From the perspective the Church's contextualisation,



Huang Poho divides the PCT's history into four periods.<sup>2</sup> The first period is 'the period of receiving (接受),'<sup>3</sup> from 1865 to 1950 CE, during which the Taiwanese Church was dominated by Western missionaries and a transplanted Western theology. 'The period of formation (醞釀),' from 1951 to 1970 CE, saw domestic Christians obtaining leadership within the Church and the emergence of two theologians, Shoki Coe and C. S. Song, who prepared the soil of later movements and theological developments. It was in 'the period of the awakening (覺醒),' from 1971 to 1985 CE, in which the PCT started to identify Taiwan as the Church's homeland and stand with Taiwanese people in seeking the security and future of Taiwan. It is this period, therefore, that was viewed to be the most crucial period of PCT's contextual movement. The last is 'the period of the re-confession (再告白),' from 1986 to present. Here, apart from its original political movements, the Church broadened the spheres of its social ministries and also sought to deepen the task of its contextual theology.

This chapter adopts Huang's view on the PCT's historiography in terms of the development process of the PCT's contextual movement. Based on this historical interpretation, the following paragraphs will describe each period of the PCT's development, especially focusing on the period of awakening and re-confession so as to express how the PCT's contextual movement presents humanistic characteristics and this-worldly concern. The analysis will concentrate on the dimensions of the PCT's works of contextualisation and social ministries, because these two dimensions correspond with the purpose of this chapter. It was indicated above that the third period of PCT history played the most crucial role of the PCT's contextualisation. However, the first two periods will be briefly described to show how they paved the way for this contextual movement.

### **The Period Dominated by Western Mission--The Period of Receiving**

'The period of receiving' started from the introduction of the Presbyterian Mission in 1865 to 1950 CE. Missionaries in this period showed their identification to Taiwan through learning Taiwanese, translating the Bible into romanised Taiwanese,

<sup>2</sup> Huang Poho (黃伯和), *Don't Be Strangers: The Work Handbook of Contextual Theology in Taiwan* (別作陌生人: 台灣本土神學工作手冊), Tainan, Taiwan: Church News Press (台灣台南: 人光出版社), 1996, 41-44, and also see Huang Poho, *A Theology of Self-Determination: Responding to the Hope for 'Chhut Thau Thi' of the People of Taiwan*, Tainan, Taiwan: Chhut Thau Thi Theological Study Center, 1996, 13-19, 107-109.

<sup>3</sup> All the English names of these periods are from Huang Poho, *A Theology of Self-Determination: Responding to the Hope for 'Chhut Thau Thi' of the People of Taiwan*, Tainan, Taiwan: Chhut Thau Thi Theological Study Center, 1996, 13-19.

wearing local clothing, constructing church buildings and singing hymns in the local style.<sup>4</sup> Chapter One has also indicated that in order to express God's love towards the Taiwanese people, Christian missions developed social ministries as means of evangelism. All these works show that there was no lack of contextualisation or caring for peoples' this-worldly wellbeing.

However, contemporary PCT theologians comment that these works of contextualisation remained very shallow, at the surface expression of Christian faith, without reaching deeply into Taiwanese culture, because missionaries were still negative in their views on native culture and did not see the importance of the contextualisation of Christian faith.<sup>5</sup> Chen Nanzhou maintains that social ministries at that period were considered as preparatory works of evangelisation, without being seen as having independent value.<sup>6</sup> Besides, the Church's social ministries focused only on caring for the wellbeing of individuals without paying concerning itself with the structural evils of the society, and playing a prophetic role in correcting the role of the faults of society and its ruling authority.<sup>7</sup> Although missionaries were willing to support domestic churches on the issue of their independence, it was a period when the Taiwanese Church was dominated by the Western mission. Furthermore, the PCT theology was completed transplantedly from Western theology, without presenting a the characteristics of the domestic cultures.

### **The Preparation of the Church's Contextualisation—The Period of Formation**

#### **The Independence of the Domestic Church**

A series of events in the twentieth century prepared the emergence of the PCT's contextual movement. First, the independence of the domestic Church, occurring with the detention or expulsion of missionaries in the Second World War, forced native Christians to take over the responsibilities of the Church's operations and ministry, and put them at the head of church leadership roles. The domestic Christians acquired the

<sup>4</sup> The editing group of 'Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,' *Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, revised, Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2000, 9-12. Also see Zheng Yangen (鄭仰恩), *Establishing New Taiwanese Consciousness through the Perspective of the Church History of Taiwan* (從台灣教會史的觀點論建台灣新意識的建立) in *History and Faith* (歷史與信仰), Tainan, Taiwan: Church News Press (教會公報社), 1999, 65-70.

<sup>5</sup> Chen Nanzhou, *The Theology of Identification—Protestant Churches' Construction of Indigenous Theology in the Context of Taiwan*, Logos, no 5, 2001, 77.

<sup>6</sup> Chen Nanzhou, *The Social and Political Ethics of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan* (台灣基督長老教會的社會、政治倫理), Taipei, Taiwan: Yongwang Publishing (永望文化事業有限公司), 1999, 71.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 72-73.

freedom to think about the development of its theology from their native Taiwanese perspective.

A related event was the merger of the Northern and Southern Taiwan Assemblies. In the nineteenth century, both the Scottish Presbyterian Mission and the Canadian Presbyterian Mission arrived in Taiwan, establishing their own churches in the north and south respectively. This historical development brought Presbyterian churches in two different regions belonging to different Missions and possessing their own denominational Assemblies. In 1951 CE, the two Assemblies finally joined to form a united organisation, The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.<sup>8</sup> Huang Poho points out that the merger of the two Assemblies signified a watershed of the PCT's divorce from two Western Missions and meant that it acquired autonomy in the Churches' operation.<sup>9</sup>

#### 'Doubling the Church's Movement'--The Church's New Recognition

If the above two events helped domestic Christians to consider the Church's contextualisation independently, a third event, the 'Doubling the Church's Movement (倍加運動),' helped the Church to recognise and care for their compatriots and homeland. In 1954 CE, in celebrating the Church's centenary (1865-1965), the PCT proposed to double the number of its members and churches in ten years. Through the efforts of all the local PCT's congregations, this mission movement proved abundantly fruitful by exceeding its original goal.<sup>10</sup>

Although the original purpose of this movement was evangelisation and church growth, it is considered a crucial moment in the ongoing contextual movement. Huang Poho indicates that the rapid increase of the believers' number resulted in the change of congregational structure. The Church shifted from the Church of the middle class to the Church for and even of the poor with more underprivileged people in the Church, Christians started to engage with the people at the grass roots level, causing the Church to identify and to care for the practical needs of the underprivileged.<sup>11</sup> Chen Nanzhou

<sup>8</sup> The Northern Assembly and Southern Assembly still exist as the sub-organisations of the General Assembly.

<sup>9</sup> Huang Poho (黃伯和), *Evaluating the Past and Future of Taiwanese Contextual Theology through the Church History in Taiwan* (從台灣教會史看台灣本土神學的過去與未來), Logos, no 1, April 2001, 38.

<sup>10</sup> See the statistics in the editing group of 'Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,' *Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, revised, Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2000, 29-30.

<sup>11</sup> Huang Poho, *Evaluating the Past and Future of Taiwanese Indigenous Theology through the Church History in Taiwan* (從台灣教會史看台灣本土神學的過去與未來), Logos, no 1, April 2001, 38.

analyses the influences of 'Doubling the Church's Movement' indicating that while eagerly preaching the gospel to Taiwanese people, Christians reached and evangelised people from different social levels, and therefore started to recognise the importance of the Church's relation to society and sense the needs and situation of their compatriots.<sup>12</sup> The advocacy of this Movement caused the PCT to reach deeply and be rooted in Taiwanese society.

#### The Inspiration of Pioneer Theologians

Besides the new Church leadership and new recognition, there was also theological reconsideration emerging from domestic theologians. Chapter Four mentioned the influences of Shoki Coe and C. S. Song in constructing the PCT's contextual theology. Although they left Taiwan before the emergence of a contextual theology, Coe's thinking of contextualisation and Song's appeals of 'establishing a theology in domestic soil' engendered the later development of the contextual movement and theology.

They proposed a concept that Christian theology has to relate to the context to which the Church belongs. Its construction includes interaction with domestic culture and history.<sup>13</sup> Based on this conviction, Coe and Song both claim that the theology, which was established in a Western context showing a Western philosophical and metaphysical tendency, does not suit a third world context. The Third World Churches have to construct their theologies from their own soils.<sup>14</sup> Coe and Song's convictions inspired the PCT to recognise the necessity of responding to and interacting with Taiwanese people and culture, thus to seek a Christian theology and ministry in the context of Taiwan. Moreover, both Coe and Song pointed out that the theme of suffering under colonial or direct foreign oppression was the common experience in the Third World and therefore became a common theological issue.<sup>15</sup> This perspective also inspired the Church to look after the Taiwanese people's historical sufferings and to pursue their release from an oppression of foreign regimes.

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<sup>12</sup> Chen Nanzhou, *The Social and Political Ethics of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan* (台灣基督長老教會的社會、政治倫理), Taipei, Taiwan: Yongwang Publishing (永望文化事業有限公司), 1999, 87.

<sup>13</sup> Chen Nanzhou, *The Theology of Identification*, Logos, no 5, December, 2001, 79-81.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

## Conclusion

The period of formation played a crucial role for later PCT transformation. This transformation rose from the emergence of a new social context, the change of the Church's structure, and the inspiration of theological reconsideration. These new experiences helped the growth of the Church not only in the number of its members and the churches, but also in the Church's independence in considering its own ministry and theology from a new perspective. These new experiences sowed the seeds of PCT's contextual movement and eventually brought about the Church's involvement in a series of political and social movements in the next period.

### The Period of Awakening: PCT's Three Political Statements

After the 1970s, the PCT moved towards a period of awakening, in which the PCT showed a strong tendency of caring for the present wellbeing of Taiwanese people and society. From this, a series of contextual theologies were developed together with social ministry. It was at this time that the PCT's social ministry exhibited a strong political tendency mainly focused on three political statements to be analysed at length. These political movements were pertained to the church's perspective on the history of Taiwan, and on Taiwan's national and international situations in the 1970s.

### The Context of Three Political Statements

#### PCT's Perspective on Taiwanese History

Chapter One has indicated that in the previous four hundred years, Taiwan has been ruled by six different regimes. There are two perspectives as to interpretation these regimes. One perspective views the Dutch, Spanish, and Japanese as foreign invaders. As for the Qing, KMT, and even Koxinga rule, Taiwan was at a state of returning to the shelter of its mother country, China. But from the perspective of the Taiwanese consciousness, all six regimes were foreign conquerors, because none of them was founded according to the will of the island's residents and the rule of these regimes focused on the exploitation of Taiwanese people.<sup>16</sup> According to this perspective, Taiwan is called 'the Asian Orphan (亞細亞的孤兒) and are always

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<sup>16</sup> The typical writings of the history of Taiwan that hold this perspective include Shiming (史明), *Four Hundred Years' History of Taiwanese People* (台灣四百年史), San Jose, CA: Pengdao Cultural plc (蓬島文化有限公司), 1980, and April C. J. Lin (林呈蓉) & Jerome F. Keating, *Island in the Stream: A Quick Case Study of Taiwan's Complex History*, 2nd ed., Taipei, Taiwan: Nantien Books, 2001.



under the oppression of foreign regime.’<sup>17</sup> The writings of PCT’s leaders and theologians show that PCT holds the second perspective on Taiwanese history.<sup>18</sup>

It is hard to determine whether the second view on the history of Taiwan was popular before the return of Taiwan to China after the Second World War, because at that time the Taiwanese people, including the PCT, sincerely expressed their eagerness for the retrocession of Taiwan.<sup>19</sup> However, the KMT government’s corruption and its soldiers’ poor-discipline soon changed Taiwanese people’s hope to discouragement. The government’s failures resulted in the deterioration of people’s lives and economic collapse. Taiwanese discontent finally erupted in a riot on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 1947 CE. It is estimated that at least 10,000 Taiwanese people were killed during the military suppression. Some of them were the Taiwanese elite and members of the PCT.

After the ‘2-28 Event,’ some Taiwanese considered the Nationalist regime as another foreign conqueror and began to seek the independence of Taiwan. When the central KMT government arrived in 1949 CE, its political and ideological control deepened the above perspective further strengthening the PCT’s own conscience about Taiwan’s self-governance and self-determination.

#### The Diplomatic Setbacks in the 1970s

Taiwan’s international situation in the 1970s was another factor that fermented the PCT’s political movement. The Cold War reinforced Taiwan’s strategic geographic importance and brought back economic and military aid from the United States in the 1950s. This support eased the crisis of the KMT government, while new political control and economic reformation further helped Taiwanese stability. Even though the consciousness of self-government existed in Taiwan, it was not actively implemented.

This international situation later changed, with the gradually widespread intention of welcoming the People’s Republic of China (PRC) back into the international community after its long isolation. There was an attempt of rapprochement between PRC and United States so as to oppose their common adversary, the USSR. In this, the KMT government’s inflexibility in their claims of being the sole representative of China caused Taiwan difficulties in its international relationships. Since the 1970s, diplomatic setbacks occurred one after another. This

<sup>17</sup> The term, ‘The Asian Orphan’ is from the fiction of Taiwanese writer, Wu Zhuoliu (吳濁流). See Wu Zhuoliu, *The Asian Orphan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Chienwei Publishing, 1969.

<sup>18</sup> See Chen Nanzhou, *The Social and Political Ethics of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Yongwang Publishing, 1999, 3-24.

<sup>19</sup> Concerning PCT’s attitude see *Ibid.*, 83.



predicament made the Taiwanese people sense a crisis of being conquered and ruled by Communist China, meaning another occupation and oppression by a foreign regime. In the shadow of an uncertain future, there grew a sense of responsibility for the PCT to seek a release from these diplomatic straits.

### **Contents of the Three Statements**

Influenced by the Third World theology, which considers politics to play a crucial role in eliminating the evils of social structures and in liberating an oppressed people, the PCT paid greater attention to its actions with respect to politics. The Church's actions began by issuing three political statements in the 1970s. These statements contain the common conviction that the Church should identify itself with Taiwan and care for its people's wellbeing. They show the Church's discontent that the Taiwanese people were deprived of their right to decide their future. They argue that, to be rescued from the crisis in Taiwan, political control and oppression in Taiwan must be changed. It would be found that these statements aroused suspicion and criticism from both inside and outside Christian churches. Apart from these common features, each statement reflected its own direct context and contained its own characteristics, to be described in the following paragraphs.

#### **The Statement on Our National Fate (對國是的聲明與建議)<sup>20</sup>**

On 25 October 1971 CE, the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) voted to allow the PRC to take the seat of the ROC, the official inter-national name of the Taiwanese government. Minutes before the vote, the representative of the ROC announced its withdrawal from UN. Accompanying this withdrawal was the announcement of the United States President Richard Nixon's visit to China. This first diplomatic setback astonished the Taiwanese people, but duly aroused their patriotism. Numerous statements from communities within Taiwan give insight into how Taiwan endured this crisis. The PCT also put forward 'The Public Statement of Our National Fate (PSONF),' which presents contents quite different from other proposals.

There were several features in this statement. The first is the faith conviction and basic motivation of PSONF. The prologue clearly expresses 'PCT's extreme concern over developments in the world, which could seriously affect the lives of all, who live

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<sup>20</sup> All the English titles and contents of these three political statements are from PCT's official web page. See <http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements.htm>

on this island.’<sup>21</sup> The prologue also expresses that this concern is based on the belief that ‘Jesus Christ is Lord of all men, the righteous Judge and Saviour of the world,’<sup>22</sup> clearly declaring the PCT’s concern for the wellbeing and future of Taiwan.

The second features on appeal to the international community. PSONF expresses the concern that some countries might sacrifice the interests of Taiwanese people in putting Taiwan under the rule of the PRC, through which exchanges their rapprochement with the PRC. It objects to ‘any powerful nation disregarding the rights and wishes of fifteen million people and making unilateral decisions to their own advantage.’<sup>23</sup> In this, the statement claims that Taiwanese people have the right to reject any involvement from the international community that harms Taiwan’s advantages particularly in having the right to decide its own future. This feature clearly expresses the intention of striving for the right of self-determination.

The third feature is the suggestion of political reformation in Taiwan. PSONF considers political reformation an effective way to protect Taiwan’s international reputation and to help Taiwan pass through the current crisis. The concrete suggestion of this political reformation is to hold an election of all representatives to the highest government to succeed the present representatives, who were chosen 25 years prior and never faced an election since then. The intention here is to demand real democracy in Taiwan.

These three features demonstrate the PCT’s concern for the survival of Taiwan and its self-determination for the people’s future. PSONF also considers the basic problem of Taiwan to be its lack of a true democratic system. Apart from these PSONF reveals the PCT’s standpoint of rejecting the rule of the PRC, as the Church rejects the communist political system. At this moment, the concept of seeking the independence of Taiwan has not been expressed in this statement.

### Our Appeal (我們的呼籲)

The proposal of PSONF brought down the suspicion of the KMT government and the constant surveillance of secret agents. One of the open suppressions of the PCT was to confiscate romanised Taiwanese and aboriginal Bibles. PSONT also incited

<sup>21</sup> English version sees [http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements\\_1.htm](http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements_1.htm). The Chinese text is: ‘鑑於可能嚴重地威脅台灣地區全民生存的當前國際局勢表示深的關懷,’ see the editing group of ‘Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,’ *Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, revised, Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2000, 125.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. The Chinese text is: ‘秉著耶穌基督是全地的主宰, 公義的審判者, 也是全民類救主的信仰.’

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. The Chinese text is: ‘我們反對任何國家罔顧台灣地區一千五百萬人民的人權與意志, 只顧私利而作出任何違反人權的決定.’

criticism from Christians inside and outside the PCT. All the while, the relationship between the United States and PRC was continuously moving towards normalisation. This put Taiwan in a difficult situation. Motivated by the appealing for religious freedom and of consistently caring for the future of Taiwan, the PCT published 'Our Appeal' (OA) in September 1975 CE.

In OA, the PCT defends the proposition of PSOLF, explaining that it practices the Church's prophetic ministry and cares for the future of Taiwan in helping the government to survive its current crisis. OA points out that 'Only by speaking the truth in love can we help in the developing of a democratic, just, and honest government.'<sup>24</sup> OA urges the government to 'preserve the freedom of religious faith, which is guaranteed to the people in the constitution' and 'to establish a relationship of mutual trust and confidence between the government and the Church.'<sup>25</sup> Apart from protesting government suppression, OA reinforces the conviction of PSOLF, demanding the government 'to help towards the reconciliation and working together of all people in Taiwan'<sup>26</sup> through 'eliminating the discrimination based on provincial origin or party membership.'<sup>27</sup> It also urges the government 'to help overcome our (Taiwan's) isolation in foreign relations' and 'to preserve human rights and the welfare of people.'<sup>28</sup> OA appeals to Christians and other churches 'to give attention to the problems that lie before us all' and 'to give expression to its true role of prophet and priest'<sup>29</sup> through 'giving honest expression of its concern for justice' and 'being more concerned for social justice and world problem.'<sup>30</sup>

In general, OA is a defensive document, justifying the PCT's political concern to carry out the Church's prophetic duty while expressing a genuine care for the welfare of Taiwan. It objected to all suppression of the PCT by the government, and in echoing the conviction of PSOLF, it consistently urges the government to work towards political reformation. OA also reveals that PCT started to expand the mission of the Church out of mere evangelisation, claiming that 'beside participating in the spreading

<sup>24</sup> English version is in [http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements\\_3.htm](http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements_3.htm). The Chinese text is: '惟有以愛心說誠實話, 積極關心我國政治前途, 才能協助建立開放, 民主, 公正, 廉能之政府.'

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. The Chinese texts are: '維護憲法所賦予人民宗教信仰之自由' and '建立政府與教會之互信互賴.'

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. The Chinese text is: '促進居住在台灣人民的和諧與團結'

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. The Chinese text is: '消除省籍黨籍之差異不應存有彼此之優越感.'

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. The Chinese texts are: '突破外交孤立之困境' and '保障人民的安全與福利.'

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. The Chinese texts are '我們呼籲教會注視當前所面臨之問題' and '使教會真正發揮先知的角色.'

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. The Chinese texts are: '發揚誠實公義之精神' and '關心社會之公義問題和世界問題.'

of the gospel and leading men to repent and believe in the Lord, it must express concern for the whole nation, for society, and for the whole mankind.<sup>31</sup>

#### A Declaration on Human Rights (人權宣言)

After the proposal of 'Our Appeal,' the government's surveillance and suppression continued, and Taiwan's situation in international relations worsened because of the normalisation progress between the United States and the PRC. In August of 1977 CE, on the eve of US State Secretary Vance's visit to Peking to discuss with the PRC's government the establishment of their relationship, the Taiwanese government called for everyone in Taiwan to write a personal letter to US President Jimmy Carter, begging him to look at Taiwanese people's human rights. At this moment, the PCT proposed the third political statement, 'A Declaration on Human Rights (DHR).'

Compared with the first two statements, DHR shows much stronger political overtones. Several issues were presented in this document. The first was the issue of Human Rights. Considering that President Carter claims 'Human Rights' as his principle of diplomacy, the DHR requests that Carter uphold this principle and 'to insist on guaranteeing the security, independence and freedom of the people of Taiwan.'<sup>32</sup> The second issue is self-determination. Since Human Rights is the PCT's conviction and that of the UN Declaration, in hoping to prevent Taiwan from being invaded by Communist China, DHR insists that 'the future of Taiwan shall be determined by the 17 million people who live there.'<sup>33</sup> The third issue is the independence of Taiwan, in which, for the first time, the PCT urged the government 'to face the reality and to take effective measures whereby Taiwan may become a new and independent country.'<sup>34</sup>

Behind these political issues, there are three convictions in DHR expressing why these political issues are the appeals of the PCT. The first conviction is the confession that 'Jesus Christ is the Lord of all mankind.'<sup>35</sup> The second is the belief that 'human rights and a land in which each one of us has a stake are gifts bestowed by God.'<sup>36</sup> The

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. The Chinese text is: '教會除了參與傳揚福音使人悔改信主之外,必須表達對整個國家社會及全世界的關懷.'

<sup>32</sup> See [http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements\\_4.htm](http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements_4.htm). The Chinese text is: '堅持保全台灣人民的安全,獨立與自由.'

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. The Chinese text is: '我們堅決主張台灣的將來應由台灣一千七百萬住民決定.'

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. The Chinese text is: '面對現實,採取有效措施,使台灣成爲一個新而獨立的國家.'

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. The Chinese text is: '告白耶穌基督爲全人類的救主.'

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. The Chinese text is: '確信人權與鄉土是上帝所賜.'

third is 'to beseech God that Taiwan and all the rest of the world may become a place where mercy and truth will meet together; righteousness and peace will embrace. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven (Psalm 85: 10-11).'<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

The statements in this period featured sentiments, completely different from the previous two periods. This was the first time that social concern stood at the centre of the PCT's ministry, for these statements were also the first time the PCT's churches became officially involved in social ministry. Furthermore, their social ministries were quite political, something which rarely happened in Taiwanese Church history. Deep involvement in political appeal enlarged the tension between the government and the PCT, and therefore brought about renewed suppression. But, even facing suppression from the government and opposition from society and other churches, the PCT still insisted on its points, never withdrawing from these actions. The PCT's persistency stemmed from its strong theological convictions.

## The Theological Conviction in the Three Statements

### The Sovereignty of God

PCT reaffirms the theological heritage of the Reformed tradition, claiming that God is the Lord of the world and history.<sup>38</sup> This conviction acts as the foundation of faith in all three political statements. The prologue of PSNF indicates that this conviction is conferred by the role of the Son of God, Jesus Christ.<sup>39</sup> As Jesus Christ is the Lord of all men, Chen Nanzhou points out that the implications of the lordship of God can not be restricted to the Church, but should expand to the whole world. Therefore, the Church cannot withdraw from this world, but must actively involve itself in expanding the lordship of Jesus.<sup>40</sup> This conviction is also applied to the Church's assurance that the history, current situation, and future of Taiwanese people are dependent on Jesus Christ's supremacy over history and the world. Because of this,

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>38</sup> The editing group of 'Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,' *Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, rev. ed., Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2000, 57.

<sup>39</sup> The English version is in [http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements\\_1.htm](http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements_1.htm). The Chinese text is: '秉著耶穌基督是全地的主宰, 公義的審判者, 也是全人類的救主之信仰。' See Ibid., 125.

<sup>40</sup> Chen Nanzhou, *The Social and Political Ethics of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Yongwang Publishing, 1999, 154-155.



the Taiwanese people ought not to despair because of previous experiences of suffering.<sup>41</sup>

Jesus is a righteous Judge meaning that righteousness is an attribute and principle of God's judgement. Therefore, the Church has to play the role of prophet to correct the current situation of Taiwan. This confession warns that the government and its people should repent any unrighteousness so that Taiwanese people can face in God's judgment.

Jesus is the Saviour of the world. The Saviour of the world means that the salvation of Jesus is not restricted to personal salvation but also the salvation of society. In such, the Church cannot ignore social reformation as a part of God's salvation inherent to the Church's mission. This affirmation of God's sovereignty expands the meaning of salvation and ministry of the Church. It provides the impetus of the Church, especially when their actions face severe objections and challenges.

### Homeland Is the Gift of God

The second theological significance in the three statements regards the claim that human rights and homeland are the gifts of God. Chen Nanzhou interprets homeland to be 'the land, the compatriots, peaceful lives, and sense of identification,'<sup>42</sup> thus, covering 'people and their social lives.'<sup>43</sup> The conviction that homeland is a gift from God is based on the doctrine of Creation, as the PCT asserts in the Church News (教會公報), 'The origin of human dignity is because human beings were created in God's image and the salvation of Jesus means to help the oppressed to restore their human rights, which are given by God.'<sup>44</sup> Through the affirmation that people in the world and in Taiwan are created by God, the PCT affirms the Church's identification with Taiwanese people and their homeland. This attitude of self-identification becomes a motivation for the PCT to care for the lives and wellbeing of Taiwanese people. As PSONF declares 'We are more aware of our common certainty and shared conviction—we love this island and view it as our homeland.'<sup>45</sup> The PCT claims that

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Chen Nanzhou, *The Social and Political Ethics of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Yongwang Publishing, 1999, 174. The Chinese text is: '鄉土意味著上帝賜給人的土地, 上帝賜給人的同胞, 安居, 和歸屬感.'

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 175. The Chinese text is: '鄉土含蓋同胞, 社會生活.'

<sup>44</sup> The editorial, *The Bible and Human Dignity*, Taiwan Church News, no. 1396, 3 December 1978, 2. The Chinese text is: '人的尊嚴的由來是由於上帝依他的形像創造人, 耶穌拯救世人的意思是幫勵受欺壓的人恢復上帝所賦予的人權.'

<sup>45</sup> The English version is in [http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements\\_1.htm](http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements_1.htm). The Chinese text is: '我們均擁有堅決的共同信念與熱望——我們愛這島嶼, 以此為家鄉.' See The editing group of 'Knowing



any act of suppression of the dignity and wellbeing of Taiwanese people denies God's will and the order of his creation. The PCT also claims that, as a gift given by God, Taiwanese people have the right to determine their life style and future. This conviction becomes the motivation for the advancement of self-determination and the political reformation of Taiwan.

### The Ministry of the Christian Church

To justify the Church's three political statements, the PCT claims that social and political ministries are central to the Church's ministry. OA suggests that 'the aim of the church's existence is to communicate the message of God's love...so that the love of God may truly be spread throughout the world.'<sup>46</sup> Considering that most of the churches in Taiwan viewed the Church's mission to be proclaiming the gospel so that people acquire personal salvation, OA asserts that the Church cannot restrict its mission to just leading men to personal salvation, but 'must concern for the whole nation, for society, and for the whole of mankind.'<sup>47</sup> However, among the different spheres of the Church's social ministry, the PCT restricts its movements to politics. This tendency is evident in the PCT's appeal of the three statements, in urging the government's political reformation, calling for the establishment of a new and independent country, and claiming that the people's right of self-determination. It further shows in its consistent support of Taiwan's democratic movement since the 1970s. Chen Nanzhou indicates that this tendency is because of the conviction that, 'to establish a just political system is the foundation of social justice, for an unjust political system is the source of social injustice.'<sup>48</sup> Moreover, the three statements point out that the ministry of the Church is based on the needs of the context, including the current difficulties of the international situation, the threat of Communist China, and the totalitarianism and political inequality within Taiwan. These contexts therefore shaped the three statements to focus the PCT's ministry on appeals for self-determination, human rights, social and political justice, and the independence of the country.

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the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,' *Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, revised, Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2000, 125.

<sup>46</sup> The English version is in [http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements\\_3.htm](http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements_3.htm). The Chinese text is: '教會存在的目的也是為達成傳達上帝愛的信息...使上帝的愛真正普及於世.'

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 119. The Chinese text is: '必需表達對整個國家社會及全人類的關懷.'

<sup>48</sup> Chen Nanzhou, *The Social and Political Ethics of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Yongwang Publishing, 1999, 224. The Chinese text is: '追求社會公義, 常常必須先建立公道的政治結構, 不公平的政治結構是諸多社會不公的源頭.'

### God's Attributes as the Source of Social Ethics

In focusing the Church's social ministry, social ethics became an important issue underlying the PCT's three statements. When the Church made political appeals, several norms of social ethics were principally highlighted for the Church to judge the problems of the society in constructing an ideal state for the whole human community. Each statement contains moral requirements for the Church and for the human community. The expressed moral principles obviously originated from the PCT's understanding of the moral attributes of God, including justice, love, and peace. The scriptures, such as Micah 6:8 and Matthew 23:23, show that these morals are not only the attributes of God but are also his demands to his people, whether Israelites in the Hebrew Bible or the Church in the New Testament. In the statements, it is obvious that, as a minority in the community, the PCT is not ashamed to declare these principles to be the moral requirement for the Church and the outside community.

### Conclusion

The above paragraphs of this section have briefly portrayed the contexts, contents, and theological conviction of PCT's three political statements in the 1970s. They argue that, based on the conviction of the sovereignty of God, PCT expanded its ministry from helping people to acquire personal salvation to concern for the collective this-worldly wellbeing of the society. The statements also display PCT's identification with their homeland and therefore show their concern for the wellbeing of Taiwanese people. Moreover, they are not ashamed to play the role of God's prophets in judging themselves and the society through the moral attributes of God. These three features obviously reflect the humanistic characteristics presenting in Chapter four.

### The Period of Awakening—PCT's Contextual Theology

Accompanying the practical actions of the PCT's contextual movement and social ministries, there was the emergence of the PCT's contextual theology. This section will examine this theology, so as to acquire a more comprehensive picture of PCT's contextual movement. The PCT's contextual theology emerged and developed together with the above political concerns at the awakening period. Its construction originated from the contributions of its two pioneer Taiwanese theologians, Coe and Song. After circulating the three statements, with the purpose of defending against suspicion, the General Assembly of the PCT invited Rev. Wang Hsienchi, the

professor of Tainan Theological College and Seminary, to act as a theological consultant. The expectation was for him to construct a contextual theology to explain the theological significance of these statements, in the hopes of responding to the suspicions arising inside and outside PCT.<sup>49</sup> In 1979 CE, when Theological Commission of Christian Conference of Asia (TCCCA) was held in Taiwan, the PCT's theologians proposed two theological issues, homeland and Chhut Thau Thi, to be the main theological issues of Taiwanese theology. According to Huang Poho, the proposition of the Confession of Faith (信仰告白) in 1985 CE can be slated as a summary of the theological developments in this period and the starting point for the new period of re-confession.<sup>50</sup>

Holding the Bible and the theological foundation of the Reformed tradition to be the foundation of its theological development,<sup>51</sup> the PCT's contextual theology especially focuses on its interaction with the domestic context and culture, and thereby taking root in the domestic soil.<sup>52</sup> Several theologians contributed to the construction of this contextual theology by developing different but closely related issues that include identification, homeland, Chhut Thau Thi/self-determination, and the Kingdom of God.

### **The Theology of Identification (認同神學)**

#### **Identification as the Spirit of the Church's Mission and Theology**

Chen Nanzhou indicates that behind the main issues of contextual theology, homeland and Chhut Thau Thi, express the identity that lies at the heart of the PCT's contextual theology. He asserts that the PCT's contextual theology is a theology of 'identifying with the suffering and hope of Taiwanese people, and identifying with the history and culture of Taiwan.'<sup>53</sup> The spirit of the Church's identification with Taiwan and the Taiwanese people is also expressed in the PCT's Confession of Faith, 'We believe that the Church... is both rooted in this land identifying with all its inhabitants,

<sup>49</sup> Rev. Wang actually was the pastor and theologian of the Episcopal Church in Taiwan. At that time, Episcopal Church in Taiwan was the partner Church of PCT and all the ministers of Episcopal Church were trained in TTCS. This is the reason that Rev. Wang taught theology there.

<sup>50</sup> Huang Poho, *Evaluating the Past and Future of Taiwanese Indigenous Theology through the Church History in Taiwan*, Logos, no 1, April, 2001, 42.

<sup>51</sup> Chen Nanzhou, *The Social and Political Ethics of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Yongwang Publishing, 1999, 138.

<sup>52</sup> Huang Poho, *Evaluating the Past and Future of Taiwanese Indigenous Theology through the Church History in Taiwan*, Logos, no 1, April, 2001, 41.

<sup>53</sup> Chen Nanzhou, *The Theology of Identification*, Logos, no 5, December, 2001, 88. The Chinese text is '台灣本土神學...是認同台灣人民的苦難與盼望的神學,也是認同台灣歷史與文化的神學.'

and through love and suffering becomes the sign of hope.’<sup>54</sup> The Church’s identification with Taiwan is displayed in dual respects. In examining Taiwanese history, it identifies with and cares for the suffering and hope of Taiwanese people. In respect to culture, it makes efforts to investigate the theological significance of Taiwanese cultural fabric.

### Biblical Foundation of the Theology of Identification

Chen Nanzhou indicates that the story of the Bible is a history of God identifying himself with human beings. The most crucial event in the Hebrew Bible, the exodus of the Israelites, is the event expressing God’s identification with the suffering of his people. God called on Moses to lead the Israelites out from under the enslavement of Pharaoh. This exodus event not only presents God’s attributes of justice and love while also displaying his identity alongside the Israelites. This identification not only liberated the Israelites and provide them with a new position, but also achieved the Israeli identification with God’s law as the guiding principle of their social and individual lives, through which a new culture and community were created.<sup>55</sup>

Chen also points out the incarnation of Jesus Christ in the New Testament as the chief example of God’s identification with the people, expressing his love for all human beings. This helps people perceive the value and dignity of humanity, and establishes personal identification with Christ and his vision of the Kingdom of God. They are therefore willing to follow him in his commitment to the actualisation of the Kingdom of God.<sup>56</sup>

### The Application of the Theology of Identification

The practical application of the theology of identification is in two fold, obviously following from the work of Coe and Song. The first is the identification with the history and current situation of Taiwan. The preceding paragraphs noted the PCT’s typical perspective on Taiwanese history, namely, that it is a history of oppression by foreign conquerors, without ever obtaining the freedom to decide their own condition and future. Therefore, to identify with the history and current situation in Taiwan

<sup>54</sup> The English version is quoted from the official English publication of PCT. See [http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements\\_5.htm](http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements_5.htm). The Chinese text is: ‘我們信，教會是...且根植於本地，認同所有的住民，通過愛與受苦，而成為盼望的記號。’ The editing group of ‘Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,’ *Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, rev. ed., Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2000, 135.

<sup>55</sup> Chen Nanzhou, *The Theology of Identification*, Logos, no 5, December, 2001, 88.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 89.

means to recognise this situation and stand with these Taiwanese people commonly striving for their liberation and self-determination.

The second respect in seeking identification with Taiwan is the stated conviction of the importance of identifying the Church with Taiwanese culture, by interpreting Christian theology from the perspectives and resources of Taiwanese culture. Based on the theoretical foundation of Song's thinking, 'doing theology from the soil of Asia,' there is a theological tendency of integrating the story and culture of the Taiwanese people as the sources for a theological construction. In this, some young theologians have devoted themselves to the construction of this new method for Taiwanese theology, with this new direction of the PCT's contextual theology becoming one of the focuses during the period of re-confession, which will be mentioned next.

### **Homeland Theology (鄉土神學)**

#### **Basic Concept of Homeland Theology**

As one of two main issues in the PCT's contextual theology, the homeland is the subject that the Church is more concern with. Homeland is considered the gift and commission of God. As the declaration of the PCT's Confession of Faith, 'We believe that God has given human beings dignity, talents and a homeland, so that they may share in God's creation, and have responsibility with Him for taking care of the world.'<sup>57</sup> Homeland theology was first proposed by Wang Hsienchih one year after he had been commissioned as the PCT's theological consultant. Wang points out four themes in homeland theology, which are people, land, power, and God. Through some biblical paradigms, the covenants between God and his people, Wang appropriates the status of these four elements into their respective relations, and then applies these paradigms to Taiwanese history.

#### **Biblical Foundation of Homeland Theology**

The first paradigm Wang proposes is the Noachic Covenant (Genesis 9:1-17). The purpose of God establishing a covenant with Noah is that 'reverence for life is the will of God for all creatures.'<sup>58</sup> One of the most important covenants is the Abrahamic

<sup>57</sup> The English version is from the official English publication of PCT's Faith confession. See [http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statement\\_5.htm](http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statement_5.htm). The Chinese text is: '我們信, 上帝賜給人有尊嚴, 才能, 以及鄉土, 使人有份於祂的創造, 負責任與祂一同管理世界。' See the editing group of 'Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,' *Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, rev. ed., Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2000, 135.

<sup>58</sup> Wang Hsienchih, *Some Perspectives of Homeland Theology in the Taiwanese Context* in *Frontiers in Asian Christian Theology: Emerging Trends*, R. S. Sugirtharajah ed., Maryknoll, New York: Orbis,



Covenant (Genesis 17:1-14). Wang points out that the story about Abraham is an archetype for all peoples on earth, presenting a symbol that people have to flee from Babylon, a signifier of oppression. This implies that Taiwan must struggle to free itself from the oppression of foreign invaders. Furthermore, the promises of God to Abraham include land, a great nation with many descendants, and blessing and mutual blessing between Abraham's descendants and other peoples.<sup>59</sup> The four themes of homeland theology are highlighted here, indicating that people, land, and national power are God's gifts and have to be properly administered under his sovereignty. Moreover, the purpose of God's blessings to a certain man and his people is to bring these blessings to other people rather than conquest and oppression.

The Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 19) is the enlargement of the Abrahamic Covenant. The salvation of God in the event of 'the exodus' once again symbolises the people's liberty from oppression and God's blessings to the people through the gifts of land, abundance, and the establishment of a nation. These blessings to the Israelites were the commission of God for the blessing of other people in this world, but the Israelites misunderstanding God's original intention, caused them to establish the idea of nationalism, with exclusive attitudes to and conflicts with other people. The bloody conquest of Canaan is a clear example a powerful people's distortion of the will of God: examples like this appear consistently in the history of Taiwan.<sup>60</sup>

Wang indicates that the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7) is the continuation of this concept of nationalism with the action of oppressing weak people. David's appointment of Solomon as his successor equated the Israelite rejection of God's sovereignty, which eventually led to the split of the kingdom. The exile caused the Israelites to reconsider their deviation from the covenants of the patriarchs and brought about the concept presented in second Isaiah, the identification of the house of Jacob as a servant to bear witness to Yahweh's justice, peace, and love among the all nations. (Isaiah 41:8-10; 43:18) However, the rise of nationalism among the Jews from the time of Second Isaiah to Jesus' birth brought solidified the idea of ethnocentric political messianism.<sup>61</sup>

Jesus offered a completely different perspective in his beliefs of the suffering servant. In his mind, the power to dominate should be radically transformed into the power to serve, and the ethnocentric and nationalistic significance of the patriarchal

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1994, 188.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.



covenants should be transformed to the universal symbol of Abraham as the father of faith in God. Inherent in the paradigm of Jesus' servant politics is a new world order, including a new humanity and a community in accordance with the power to serve and love. This new covenant in Christ becomes the model and hope of the people in the world and contemporarily for the people of Taiwan as well.<sup>62</sup>

### Main Features of Homeland Theology

In homeland theology, Wang gives his interpretation of several biblical paradigms referring them to the context of Taiwan, especially to its history and political situation. This theology maintains first that human beings are created in the image of God and that the reverence for human life is the will of God. Second, the homeland and blessings are the promises of God, and are the legal rights of all people. Thirdly, as human history is typically the story of people striving for freedom from oppression hoping to possess God's promises and blessings. Fourth, the purpose of God's blessing is to call people to serve and love others instead of dominating or subjugating them. This purpose is to establish a new world order, one in which there is mutual blessing between nations. These features of homeland theology provide a theoretical foundation for the Church and Taiwanese people to establish a new identification with their homeland, setting forth a vision of opposing oppression from inside and outside Taiwanese society.

### The Theology of 'Chhut Thau Thi' (出頭天)

#### The Meaning of 'Chhut Thau Thi'

Standing by these Taiwanese people striving for 'Chhut Thau Thi' is the central goal of the PCT's contextual movement. Huang Poho adopted this issue as the main theme of his theology. 'Chhut Thau Thi' is a popular Taiwanese proverb and is literally interpreted by Huang as meaning 'to raise one's head out of darkness to see the blue sky and breathe the spring air.'<sup>63</sup> Normally Huang translates it as, 'liberation' or 'salvation,' but C. S. Song translates it as 'self-determination.'<sup>64</sup> Its original meaning is to search for 'a utilitarian success,' which is considered by Huang 'the ethos of selfishness and individualism,'<sup>65</sup> or a hope for liberation from suffering and

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>63</sup> Huang Poho, *A Theology of Self-Determination: Responding to the Hope for 'Chhut Thau Thi' of the People of Taiwan*, Tainan, Taiwan: Chhut Thau Thi Theological Study Center, 1996, 10.

<sup>64</sup> C. S. Song, ed., *Self-Determination: The Case for Taiwan*, Tainan, Taiwan: Taiwan Church Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1998.

<sup>65</sup> Huang Poho, *A Theology of Self-Determination: Responding to the Hope for 'Chhut Thau Thi' of the*

oppression. Huang applies the third meaning to the current situation of Taiwan in the demand for democracy and autonomy of Taiwanese people.<sup>66</sup> The reason that 'Chhut Thau Thi' becomes the main issue of the PCT's contextual theology is because it is considered to be a unifying struggle containing a profound hope for Taiwanese people.

#### 'Chhut Thau Thi'—A Common Hope for Taiwanese People

The conviction that 'Chhut Thau Thi' is the common hope for Taiwanese people is based in Taiwanese perspectives of their own history, mentioned earlier. Huang indicates that the immigrant characters of the Taiwanese people especially formulated the hope for 'Chhut Thau Thi.' There were various waves of immigration throughout the history of Taiwan. These immigrants all shared the same experiences of fleeing from political oppression or poor material conditions on the Chinese Mainland, searching for a new promised land but in their struggling to settle down, becoming the curse of the earlier inhabitants, and being oppressed by later immigrants and struggling for the survival under the oppression. These universal immigration experiences of Taiwanese people formulated the common hope for 'Chhut Thau Thi,' liberation from oppression and enslavement. For Taiwanese immigrants, 'Chhut Thau Thi' was the original purpose of their immigration to Taiwan, evident in their continuous struggle and hopes. After the '2-28 Event', the totalitarian rule of the KMT government and the threat from Communist China made the realization of 'Chhut Thau Thi' to hold a focus on self-determination, democratisation of the nation, and autonomy from the control of foreign countries.

#### The Theological Significance of 'Chhut Thau Thi'

From a Christian perspective, Huang presents the parallel between Biblical Israelite history and Taiwanese people's immigration experience, in which both are striving for liberation, so as to point out the significance of the Christian faith engaging in the struggle of Taiwanese people. The biblical examples mentioned in his writings include the story of Abraham, Exodus, and Ruth.<sup>67</sup> He indicates that if in Genesis 12 and 28, Exodus, and Ruth 1, God called Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Ruth to leave their original situations of oppression to being a journey of liberation, God also calls on the ancestors of all Taiwanese people to leave their own situations and to seek out

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*People of Taiwan*, Tainan, Taiwan: Chhut Thau Thi Theological Study Center, 1996, 10.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 79-81, 96-103, 114-117.

‘Chhut Thau Thi.’ Therefore, ‘Chhut Thau Thi’ is a call and promise from God, because liberation is his everlasting promise.<sup>68</sup> It is also the current mission of the Church in Taiwan and a way for the Church to express its identification with Taiwanese people.

### The Implications of ‘Chhut Thau Thi’ in Taiwanese Theology

Therefore, the Christian mission in Taiwan has to restore the self-determination of the Taiwanese people. Examining the definition of self-determination, obtaining freedom to make autonomous decisions, Huang asserts that it consists of three implications.<sup>69</sup> The first and most popularly recognised is the political one. This dimension includes searching for a democratic political system so that people can decide their government and political leaders, and gaining the independence of Taiwan which means permitting the people total freedom to decide their future. All of these of self-determinate actions help the Taiwanese people to be free from the threats of foreign regimes. However, Huang considers this political implication to be on surface level for there are cultural and religious implications of ‘Chhut Thau Thi.’ The cultural dimension of self-determination means being a responsible person, one that acquires the freedom to make decisions by oneself and then to be responsible for one’s own personhood, dignity, and life. The religious dimension means to be ‘a being of God, one to face God and to be responsible for God, the Creator.’<sup>70</sup> These aspects of self-determination show that, although the direct implication of the theology of self-determination is political in its relationship to the current situation in Taiwan, Huang actually intends to construct a theology that can be applied to the sphere of individual reformation and, by extension, to a more comprehensive social one.

### The Theology of the Kingdom of God

#### The Kingdom of God as the Vision of PCT’s Mission

Although these three theologians do not state that the Kingdom of God is the main theme of their theologies, this concept plays an important role in the PCT’s mission and contextual theology. Its importance is evident in the final part of Confession of Faith, declaring the hope that ‘the world his Kingdom (will be) full of

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>69</sup> Huang Poho, interviewed by Maurie Sweeney, tape recording in Huang’s office, in Tainan, August 26, 2002.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

justice, peace, and joy.’<sup>71</sup> It is also displayed in the PCT’s mission movement, the Mission of the Kingdom of God (上帝國的宣教), in 1994 CE, to be introduced in the next section. The actualisation of the Kingdom of God is the vision and hope of the PCT, thus becoming the centre of the Church’s mission.

#### This-worldly Characteristic of the Kingdom of God

George Ladd asserts that there are three typologies about the thinking of the Kingdom of God in the history of Christianity.<sup>72</sup> The first is the eschatological typology, which maintains that the Kingdom of God refers to a future apocalyptic reality. The second is a ‘non-eschatological’ understanding, holding the view that the Kingdom of God has already arrived. The third is a synthetic interpretation, emphasising the progressive and dynamic character of the Kingdom, a reality that has already become present in history yet needs to attain its complete fulfillment in the future. The above quote from the Confession of Faith clearly shows that the PCT holds a strong conviction of relating the Kingdom of God to this world. Besides, three theologians, Chen, Huang, and Wang, all claim that the realisation of the Kingdom of God in this world and in the current context of Taiwan is the common vision of the PCT’s mission.<sup>73</sup>

#### Eschatological Characteristic of the Kingdom of God

However, Chen and Huang also claim that this does not mean that the PCT rejects the eschatological characteristic of the Kingdom of God.<sup>74</sup> They indicate that the PCT still retains the conviction of the final fulfillment of an eschatological Kingdom at the time of Jesus’ Parousia. This conviction is also expressed in the Confession of Faith

<sup>71</sup> The English version is from the official English publication of PCT’s Confession of Faith. See [http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements\\_5htm](http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements_5htm). The Chinese text is: ‘使世界成為祂的國度,充滿公義,平安,和喜樂.’ See the editing group of ‘Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.’ *Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, rev. ed., Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2000, 135.

<sup>72</sup> The division and terms of these three typologies are from George Ladd. See George E. Ladd, *Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952, 21.

<sup>73</sup> See Chen Nanzhou, *The Social and Political Ethics of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Yongwang Publishing, 1999, 275, and also see Wang Hsienchi, *Some Perspectives on Homeland Theology in the Taiwanese Context* in *Frontiers in Asian Christian Theology: Emerging Trends*, R. S. Sugiatharajah ed., Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1994. In his interview with Maurie Sween, Huang Poho also indicates the this-worldly tendency of the Kingdom of God. See Huang Poho, interviewed by Maurie Sween, tape recording in Huang’s office, in Tainan, 26 August 2002.

<sup>74</sup> Chen Nanzhou, *The Social and Political Ethics of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Yongwang Publishing, 1999, 275-276, and Huang Poho, interviewed by Maurie Sween, tape recording in Huang’s office, in Tainan, 26 August 2002.

‘so that we may bear witness among all peoples until the Lord comes again.’<sup>75</sup> Chen indicates that simultaneously declaring the eschatological and the this-worldly characteristics of the Kingdom of God is not contradictory, because the Kingdom of God in Jesus’ declaration in fact contains both. He also indicates that the this-worldly characteristic of the Kingdom helps the Church pay attention to its this-worldly mission, and its eschatological characteristic further strengthens the driving force of the Church’s this-worldly ministry. It provides a hope for the Church to confirm the eventual success of its this-worldly mission, while preventing the Church from becoming self-satisfied with what it has already done and encouraging it to move toward its ongoing ministry.<sup>76</sup> Chen and Huang’s perspectives show that the PCT attempts to integrate these two concepts to construct a foundation for its ministry of this-worldly reformation.

### The Kingdom of God—The Actualisation of an Ideal World

Maintaining a this-worldly characteristic of the Kingdom of God does not mean that the PCT intends to establish a visible and political Christendom through political actions. Chen claims that the PCT respects the principle of the separation of Church and State and, that the PCT does not consider it appropriate to become directly involved in the formation of the nation’s political policy or to acquire political power in the government.<sup>77</sup> To actualise the Kingdom of God in this world means to assert the sovereignty of God through seeking the actualisation of an ideal world that can reflect God’s principles and attributes.<sup>78</sup> The preceding section ascribed some of God’s attributes as justice, love, and peace because these attributes are particularly relevant to contemporary Taiwan. In general, PCT’s belief in the Kingdom of God is that of an ideal society which should be actualized in this world.

### Conclusion

The theologies developed by Chen, Huang, and Wang compose the main body of the PCT’s contextual theology. The three theologians each develop different but

<sup>75</sup> The English version is from the official English publication of PCT’s Faith confession. See [http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements\\_5.html](http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements_5.html). The Chinese text is: ‘使我們在萬民中作見證, 直到主再來.’ See the editing group of ‘Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,’ *Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, rev. ed., Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2000, 135.

<sup>76</sup> Chen Nanzhou, *The Social and Political Ethics of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Yongwang Publishing, 1999, 275-276.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 272.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

related theories, and each of these, together with the concept of the Kingdom of God, portray a full picture of contextual theology in Taiwan. It can be concluded that the identification of the context to which the Church belongs presents the spirit behind the PCT's contextual movement and theology. Therefore, the homeland, Taiwan and Taiwanese people, become the most important concern of the Church. Based on the experiences of previous Taiwanese history and the contemporary situation, striving for Chhut Thau Thi/self-determination becomes the central goal of the Church's ministry. All these actions are based on the belief that actualising the Kingdom of God in this world is the mission of the Church.

These issues of contextual theology contain the common characteristics of constructing their theologies in the soil of Taiwan. The construction includes interpreting Christian beliefs and the Church's mission through the views on Taiwanese history and its modernity, and through the sources of domestic cultures. Furthermore, these contextual theologies display strong this-worldly tendencies and the characteristics of altruism. These commonalities are evident in their enthusiastic caring for the this-worldly wellbeing of Taiwanese people and are also shown in their desire to actualise a this-worldly Kingdom of God. These tendencies present a great breakthrough in the PCT's mission and theology, and result in the PCT's making great leaps towards the contextualisation of the Church.

### **The Period of Re-confession: New Challenges and Restart**

The proposals of the Confession of Faith in 1985 CE are considered a milestone for the PCT's contextual movement, because it is the conclusion of the PCT's contextual movement and theology in the period of awakening and signifies the start of a new period. Huang Poho gives this period the name 're-confession.' Besides the dimension of theological development, there are fresh social and political situations that bring fresh challenges to the PCT and push the Church to reconsider its social ministry. They cause the Church to propose a more comprehensive understanding of its mission.

#### **New Social and Political Situation**

Since the 1980s, Taiwan's democratisation experienced a breakthrough. The government allowed the formation of an opposition party in 1986, lifted martial law in 1987, held new elections for all the seats of the representatives of the central government in 1991, permitted a direct presidential election in 1996, and witnessed the



election of the first non-KMT president, Chen Shuibian (陳水扁) in 2000. This political liberation achieved one of the PCT's two political appeals. Nevertheless, this achievement also forces a reconsideration of the PCT's social ministry.

After achieving the goal of democratisation, what is the next movement of the PCT's political and social concern? It is obvious that the other political appeal, seeking the self-determination to reject the invasion of foreign regimes, remains an unfinished task. The PCT has to adapt its role in national political affairs. But more fundamentally, the fact remains that even after achieving political reformation Taiwan's social problem are far from over.

In the vein that seeking political reformation is the most effective means to solve the problems of society, political actions become the focus of PCT's social ministry in the awakening period.<sup>79</sup> However, while political reformation can claim some basic victories, the social situation has not gotten better. On the contrary, as Chapter One has indicated, after the 1980s, the political and social change caused the collapse of the value system and moral chaos in Taiwan. As the PCT's project of '21<sup>st</sup> Century New Taiwan's Mission Movement' declares:

Under the influence and rapid development of information technologies, the international society has moved towards economic globalization. The people in Taiwan through exposure to internal and external pressures and tensions, are experiencing identity distortion and social disorder. Human relations are destroyed, and their spirituality decayed and polluted.<sup>80</sup>

This does not mean that the previous efforts of political reformation were in vain, but the condition at least reveals two implications. First, when entering the new stage, the whole Taiwanese society has to face the new challenges, such as globalisation, reconstruction of value systems, materialism and moral corruption, which still await the Church's attention. Furthermore, the deterioration of the social situation means that, along with political actions, the Church cannot ignore the other spheres of its

<sup>79</sup> Chen Nanzhou, *The Social and Political Ethics of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Yongwang Publishing, 1999, 160, 224.

<sup>80</sup> The Research and Development Center, The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, *21<sup>st</sup> Century New Taiwan Mission Movement (21 世紀新台灣宣教運動)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2002, 4. The Chinese text is: '回顧近年來台灣社會的演變...台灣人民經歷內外情事的衝擊, 面對多元化的張力, 加上身份認同的模糊以及新秩序未建立, 導致整個社會失序, 人際關係緊張, 人的靈頓然被淘空或扭曲, 台灣社會的問題逐漸從結構性的束縛, 轉向人文, 心靈的腐化與污染.'

social ministries, which have been neglected by PCT in past decades.

The widespread Pentecostal movement in Christian churches in Taiwan also reveals the spiritual shortage inside the Church. There is no direct evidence that paying too much attention to the political movement resulted in the Church's neglect of its spirituality. However, Huang Poho indicates that 'it is recent emergence of the charismatic movement within the church circle that has brought to light that weak point, the lack of attention to individual spiritual needs.'<sup>81</sup> This means that the Church can no longer ignore the ministries of spiritual formation. The former General Secretary of the PCT, Yang Qishou (楊啓壽) clarifies the relation between spirituality and social ministry, claiming 'while striving for freedom and justice, we often feel hopeless and frustrated. Therefore, we need the power of the Holy Spirit to help us to move forward.'<sup>82</sup> Spiritual formation is another issue that must occupy the PCT's attention.

### **The Mission of the Kingdom of God**

The concept of 'the Mission of the Kingdom of God' is the main principle guiding the PCT's mission in its re-confession period. This concept is expressed through 'Biblical Foundation and Theological Standpoint to the Gospel Movement for the Year 2000 (兩千年福音運動的聖經根基和神學立場),' an article written by the PCT in response to the Gospel Movement for the Year 2000 (公元兩千年福音運動) in 1994 CE. This article is based on the conviction that the actualisation of the Kingdom of God is the consistent vision of the PCT's mission.<sup>83</sup> It 'centers on the sovereignty of God and seeks that all the hearts of individuals, and all the social and political structures are submitted under the rule of God.'<sup>84</sup> It points out that the strategies of this mission should contain both internal and external dimensions. The internal dimension includes elevating Christians' spirituality through local church teachings and nurturing ministries so that the Word of God might present practical influence in Christians' daily lives. The external dimension is to seek the integration of evangelisation and social ministries into the Church's mission. Through these two dimensions, Christians

<sup>81</sup> Huang Poho, *A Theology of Self-Determination: Responding to the Hope for 'Chhut Thau Thi' of the People in Taiwan*, Tainan, Taiwan: Chhut Thau Thi Theological Study Center, 1996, 131.

<sup>82</sup> Yang Qishou (楊啓壽), *Reconsidering the Mission and Role of the Church in Taiwan* (台灣教會的使命與角色), Logos, no. 1, April 2001, 34.

<sup>83</sup> The content is translated from Xue Bozan (薛伯讚), *The Mission and the Kingdom of God* (上帝國與宣教), Tainan, Taiwan: Taiwan Church Press, 1996, 206.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. The Chinese text is: '上帝國就是以上帝的主權為中心, 從人的心靈到社會, 政治的結構都降服在上帝的統治下.'

can actualise the Kingdom of God, as ‘yeast makes the dough grow’ (Mt. 13: 33). The final part of the article points to the Christian mission of claiming that the actualisation of the Kingdom of God in Taiwan should be the common goal of the Church in Taiwan, so as to ‘make all Taiwanese people commonly possess God’s justice, peace, and joy through the Church’s efforts in witnessing to Jesus’ salvation.’<sup>85</sup>

The above paragraphs show the main features of the concept of ‘the Mission of the Kingdom of God.’ There is consistency of conviction between the periods of awakening and of re-confession in claiming the Kingdom of God to be the vision of the Church, in paying attention to its this-worldly dimension, and in expressing strong concern for the context of Taiwan and for social ministry. While facing the new challenges, this article further asserts the importance of spirituality in its mission and the place of evangelisation in the Church. Though this article does not mention much by way of practical strategies, it provides a theoretical foundation for the Church’s mission in this period and brings about the ‘21<sup>st</sup> Century’s New Taiwan Mission Movement (21 世紀新台灣宣教運動).’

### 21<sup>st</sup> Century New Taiwan Mission Movement

The 21<sup>st</sup> century new Taiwan mission movement was proposed in 1999 CE for the upcoming century. It is based on ‘the Mission of the Kingdom of God’ and attempts to develop practical aspects of the earlier mission statement. The consistency between these two articles is expressed by the actualisation of the Kingdom of God in this world as the common vision of the PCT’s mission. Three dimensions of the above mentioned mission are highlighted to be developed as practical projects. The theme of this movement is ‘To Actualise the Kingdom of God through Building *Koinonia* (營造共同體, 實現上帝國),’<sup>86</sup> which means that the Church’s active involvement in the community/tribe<sup>87</sup> will be its primary focus.

The interior dimension of the practical projects are of ‘renewing spirituality and deepening the faith (靈命更新, 深化信仰).’<sup>88</sup> This project is based on the conviction

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 208. The Chinese version is ‘使所有台灣同胞共同享有上帝的公義, 和平和喜樂, 而竭力見證基督福音對台灣人民的拯救信息.’

<sup>86</sup> The Research and Development Center, The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, *21<sup>st</sup> Century New Taiwan Mission Movement*, Taipei, Taiwan: General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2002, 6.

<sup>87</sup> The tribe is emphasised here to express PCT’s respect for the culture and social structure of the aborigines.

<sup>88</sup> The Research and Development Center, The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, *21<sup>st</sup> Century New Taiwan Mission Movement*, Taipei, Taiwan: General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2002, 7.

that deepening Christians' faith and spirituality are the keys for Christianity's commitment to the reformation of society. The practical action of this ministry includes two aspects. The first is the 'Reading the Bible with New Perspective Movement (新眼光讀經運動).' This movement is designed for deepening the insight of believers in their acquaintance with the Scriptures and in their familiarisation with the contexts of Taiwan in the light of God's plan of salvation. The second is spiritual formation, including the renewal of Christian worship and inter Christian fellowship. The basic conviction of these projects is to rekindle the spirituality of Christian communities through spiritual renewal so as to bring about the reformation of the whole society.

The external dimensions in this movement are two pronged. The first is to reclaim the importance of evangelisation in the PCT's mission, while the other focuses on 'Transforming the communities and reconstructing human hearts (轉化社會, 重建心靈).' <sup>89</sup> Based on churches' experiences of *koinonia*, this dimension is meant to encourage churches' active participation in the community/tribe so as to promote the spirit of *koinonia* and to carry out their reformation.

The practical projects can be classified into several spheres. The first is the care for the family. This sphere claims the importance of the family to the whole society and points out the real crisis of familial breakdown in Taiwan. Its practical projects include education about family relationships, single parent support groups, caring for seniors, and childhood/adolescent development. There is also the concern for ecological protection, which represents the PCT's belief in caring for the homeland environment, in light of the recent ecological crisis in Taiwan. Its projects include recycling, caring for forests and reforestation. Next is the preservation of cultural and historical heritages, which originated from the PCT's conviction that the loss of cultural identity resulted in the current collapse of value systems and the popularity of materialism in Taiwan. This includes activities of reliving the history, customs, and traditions of different peoples in Taiwan. Last, there is the care for the underprivileged people of society. This sphere represents the PCT's conviction of actualising God's attributes of justice and love, including appeals for gender equality, caring for benefits of aborigines, participating in the works of alcohol and drug abstention, and caring for the homeless.

These projects show that '21<sup>st</sup> Century New Taiwan Mission Movement' has broadened the spheres of the PCT's ministries. Besides affirming spiritual formation

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

of Christians and evangelisation in the mission, the Church has expanded its actions from political concerns to different spheres of social ministries. However, it can be argued that these projects of social concern are too broad and fragmented. Since this mission movement just started with an active focus on the grass roots level of local churches, it is hard to assess the effects of this movement thus far. In general, the PCT's mission movement is still consistent with their this-worldly and homeland focus, while moving forward towards other social agendas.

### Political Concern

The beginning of this section mentioned that after democratisation has acquired a breakthrough, the PCT had to consider what would be the next step of its political concerns. The PCT is continuously concerned with the progress of democratisation, such as appealing for the new election of the parliament and a direct election of presidency. They also promote public statements expressing their concern for the rights of aborigines, the release of political prisoners, the reversion of 2/28 Event, and opposing the construction of nuclear power stations.

Seeking self-determination in rejecting foreign countries' interference in the future of Taiwan is still an unfinished task. This political appeal developed from simply seeking self-determination to an official proclamation for the independence of Taiwan. This appeal is best shown in the PCT's 'Statement of the Independence of Taiwan's Sovereignty' in 1991 CE and also in the 'Movement of Joining the United Nations with the Name of Republic of Taiwan.'<sup>90</sup> Openly appealing for the independence of Taiwan does arouse suspicions both inside and outside the PCT. Yang Qishou raised the question that whether insisting on the independence of Taiwan contradicts the conviction of self-determination, as the possibility exists that most Taiwanese might consider independence harmful to the interests of the Taiwan.<sup>91</sup>

Besides, before Chen Shuibian was elected president in 2000 CE, the PCT has consistently stood along side the opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party, (DMP). After the DMP built its regime, the PCT faced a decision of whether to keep

<sup>90</sup> The Chinese names of these two statements are: '台灣主權獨立宣言' and '以台灣國名,行台灣路:台灣國家正名,加入聯合國運動.'

<sup>91</sup> Yang, Qishou, *Reconsidering the Mission and Role of the Church in Taiwan* (反省台灣教會的使命與角色), Logos, no. 1, April 2001, 30. The Chinese text is: '我們不能避免一個嚴肅的問題,自決是否等同於台灣獨立...我們認為是為了台灣人民的福祉而作了如此的呼籲...這在過去和現在是否屬實?...我們一度相信,大多數的台灣人民是支持台灣獨立的...但是一次又一次的選舉,支持獨立的選票沒有增加....更重要的是,(獨立)好似已成為我們的信仰告白了,...它是一個神學議題,或是一個政議題?'



on identifying with the new ruling party, or to steer away from political alignment, opting to play a prophetic role. Regarding this issue, Yang Qishui asserts that ‘at the moment that the previous associate acquires political power, the Church should keep a distance from the current regime and continuously play a critical role.’<sup>92</sup> But, a more popular view within the PCT maintains that, thus far, the Church should show its sympathy and tolerance for the difficult situation of new ruling party, and blame the opposition. The PCT’s general secretary, Lo Jonkuang, said in an interview that “So far, the so-called ‘transition of the regime’ only means the change of the president and the cabinet. The whole government’s bureaucracy is still under the control of the KMT. These bureaucrats normally respond to the new government’s policy in a perfunctory manner and even boycott it openly...Therefore, currently we need to support the new government so that they can implement their policy smoothly.”<sup>93</sup> These opinions show that, in the new political situation, there are discrepancies within PCT as to its role in political participation.

### Theological Development

Huang Poho points out a new direction of the PCT’s theological development in this period, claiming that if the awakening period witnessed the PCT’s seeking contextualisation of the Church through identifying with the context and history of Taiwan, the re-confession period shows the PCT’s identification of the Church with Taiwanese culture, in its hopes of re-confessing the faith and theology in this context.<sup>94</sup> Based on this direction, there are several aspects of theological development, called by Huang Poho an ‘emerging theology.’<sup>95</sup> Some articles representative of ‘emerging theology’ are published in ‘*Logos*’ (道), a periodical documenting the current trends of the PCT’s theological development. One issue of these emerging theologies is aboriginal theology, a theology of understanding and interpreting Christian faith and theology through the aboriginal arts, heritages, and stories so as to seek the

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 32. The Chinese text is: ‘在昔日戰友獲得權力的此刻,教會對政權應保持批判性的距離.’

<sup>93</sup> The Chinese in interview is: ‘所謂政黨輪替,只有總統和首長換了新的人,但是下面的官僚替系仍是舊國民黨的人馬,舊官僚對新政府的施政,大多是陽奉陰違,甚至公開抵制...總之是要給予支持,使其政策可以推行.’ The similar expression also shows in his writing, Lo Jonngkuang (羅榮光), *The Legislative Yuan Is on the Wrong Path* (駛錯跑道的立法院) in *Praying for Taiwan* (為台灣祈禱), Taipei, Taiwan: Wangchunfong Publishing (望春風出版社), 2001, 200-202.

<sup>94</sup> Huang Poho, *Don’t Be Strangers: The Working Handbook of the Indigenous Theology in Taiwan*, Tainan, Taiwan: Renkuang Publishing, 1996, 47-48.

<sup>95</sup> This term was used by Huang in his interview with Maurie Sween and was translated by Sween to ‘emerging theology.’ See Huang Poho, interviewed by Maurie Sween, tape recording in Huang’s office, in Tainan, 26 August 2002.



contextualisation of Christian theology in aboriginal culture.<sup>96</sup> Another issue is feminist theology, which attempts to interpret the image of women in the Christian faith from a new perspective, then applying it to contemporary gender issue in Taiwan.<sup>97</sup> There is the response to the impact of globalisation, which explores its characteristics and impact on the economics of the Third World and its influences upon local cultures, then seeking a response from Christian theology.<sup>98</sup> Besides the aboriginal theology, the other two issues do not really show an interest of deeply interacting with Taiwanese culture, but concentrate reflecting the new social situation. These emerging theologies were initiated in the 1990s and are still under construction. Therefore, these works have not yet resulted in tangible achievements.

## Conclusion

PCT's contextual movement shows consistency in its attempt to identify Christian faith with Taiwan in the emphasis of this-worldly concern and in the Church's caring for the wellbeing of Taiwanese people and society. The specific characteristics in the period of re-confession are that the political issues are still the main concern of the Church, but their social ministries actually have expanded to other spheres, covering building good families and communities, exploring cultural heritages, protecting environment and ecology, and caring for underprivileged people. Furthermore, the recovery of Christian spirituality also becomes another primary ministry. Although the practical effects of these actions wait for further observation, their social concern evidences a closer relation to the society and a deeper connection with people's daily lives.

<sup>96</sup> An example is Etan Pavavalung, *On the Incarnation of Logos in the Aboriginal Arts* (道在原住民的藝術裡), Logos, no. 5, December 2001, 67-70.

<sup>97</sup> This issue is the theme of the Logos, no. 5, December 2001. These articles include Theresa Wong (黃懷秋), *The Two Dimensions of Contemporary Feminist Theology* (當代女性神學的兩個面貌), 20-33; Cecilia Yeh (葉寶貴), *On the Multi-facets of Mary the Holy Mother* (聖母瑪利亞的千種面貌), 34-46; Fu-ya Wu (吳富雅), *Mary, Our Sister* (馬利亞, 我們的姐妹), 47-56; and Hannah Chen (陳文珊), *On the Subversion and Resubversion of Maryology* (馬利亞學的顛覆與再顛覆), 57-66.

<sup>98</sup> This issue is the theme of the Logos no. 4, October 2001. These articles include Chen Nanzhou, *On Globalisation and Contextual Theology* (全球化與實況神學), 30-38; Zheng Yangen, *Is Globalisation A New Colonialism? -On the Crisis and Challenges of Globalisation* (新的殖民主義? -試論全球化的危機與挑戰), 39-47; and Yeh, Chihsiang (葉啓祥), *Globalisation, Religion, and Taiwan* (全球化, 宗教與台灣), 48-56.

### Conclusion

The analysis offered in this chapter of the emergence of the PCT contextual theology, and socially engaged ministries evidences the transformation that has taken place in Taiwanese Protestant thinking over the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It marks a transformation from an other-worldly understanding of salvation to a this-worldly concern; from a hostile view to the domestic Taiwanese culture to the commitment of identifying the Church with its 'homeland' as the primary condition of its being the local church; from focusing the Church's mission exclusively on individual salvation to the recognition of its missionary obligation to Taiwanese society as a whole, of which the social, economic and political institutions must be challenged to respond to the Gospel in addition to the Gospel's demand on the lives of individuals. It has been shown that this new theological orientation was accompanied by the renewed ministries of social outreach in Taiwanese society, at the time when Taiwan was undergoing profound political change from dictatorship to democracy. The vision of the contextual movement centres upon a renewed understanding of the Kingdom of God, no longer perceived exclusively as a future promise pertaining only to the afterlife, but as an ideal capable of being realised in part in this world, as the 'first fruits' of what remains to be fulfilled in heaven.

From a religio-cultural perspective it can be seen that this contextual movement reflects many of the humanistic values that inform traditional Chinese culture. For example, the values of altruism that figure so prominently in Confucian ethics, are reflected in the contextual theologians' criticism of traditionally pietistic forms of soteriology that concentrate Christian concern only on personal preparation for an other-worldly salvation, and cultivate passivity towards this world that is perceived only in terms of evil. The altruism of contextual theology calls upon Christians to think first of the salvation of the homeland of which they are part, of the wellbeing of the society of which they are members, and of the good of all their fellow Taiwanese. It is an altruism that forbids the Church in Taiwan to identify the Kingdom of God with its own institutional existence, or to think of mission merely in terms of expanding the institutional church: 'the Church has to become a glorious Church not through glorifying the Church herself, but through glorifying God and actualising His Kingdom.'<sup>99</sup>

<sup>99</sup> See Xue Bozan, *The Mission and the Kingdom of God*, Tainan, Taiwan: Taiwan Church Press, 1996, 206. The Chinese version is '教會必須成爲榮耀的教會,但這並非藉著榮耀自己而來...惟有教會藉

Taiwanese contextual theology also attaches great importance to high moral attainment as the foundation of its social ethics. Justice, peace, and love are standards that the Church must live up to itself, and demand from all the peoples of Taiwan. To reform and renew society in ways that reflect the moral attributes of God has become the goal towards which the Church must strive. This entails the belief that the world can be transformed, that it is capable of being perfected, and that the Kingdom of God can be actualised in a new earth as well as a new heaven. It has been shown that this vision has become the foundation of the PCT's social ministries, through which the Church has identified itself with the Taiwanese homeland and its transformation. Once again, this social commitment to the moral good of society as a whole reflects traditional Chinese values, and has enabled the PCT to present itself credibly as a local Church with a Christian identity that is no longer perceived as alien to Taiwanese culture.

While these are examples of positive ways in which PCT contextual theology has changed the identity of the Church and its understanding of its mission, this chapter has also drawn attention to certain inadequacies in contextual theology. These are most evident in the failure of the PCT theologians to give more than notional recognition of the religiously-plural composition of Taiwanese culture. Although theologians such as Huang Poho and Chen Nanzhou emphasise the importance of the Church's identifying itself with local culture, their analysis of culture privileges social-political aspects, and fails to develop a coherent approach to inter-religious dialogue. As a result, the PCT has made little effort to enter into dialogue with the other religions of Taiwan as part of the process of contextualisation. This has been pointed out by the religious-studies scholar, Jiang Chanteng, who observes: 'Since the 1970s, PCT did not develop a real contextual theology because their works on contextualisation are only in the social level and contain only a surface form without really reaching the core of Taiwanese culture.'<sup>100</sup> The charge of superficiality may be unfair in terms of the socio-political thinking of the PCT, but it is cogent in drawing attention to the secularised view of culture that inheres in most of the PCT contextual theology movement. It is evident that barriers and impediments to inter-religious dialogue that were identified in Chapters Two and Three of this thesis have not yet been overcome by the PCT leaders

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著宣教活動高舉上帝的主權與榮耀時,教會才能成為有見證、榮耀的教會。'

<sup>100</sup> Jiang Chanteng, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Taiwan University Hospital, in Taipei, 20 December 2002. The original Chinese speech is: '我認為 1970 年代以來,長老會根本沒有發展出本土神學,他們有的只是政治關懷,或外在形式的本土化,還沒有真正進入信仰和文化的核心。'

and theologians.

In fairness to these theologians, there are some who see inter-religious dialogue as a challenge in the continuing development of Taiwanese contextual theology. It should also be recognised that, if they have been slow to take up this challenge, the same may be said of the Humanistic Buddhist movement. In terms of the theoretical analysis of religious pluralism that was proposed in Chapter One of this thesis, there exists a common feature of the contextualising movements that have been re-shaping both Taiwanese Buddhism and Christianity in recent decades, in that, they continue to approximate the pole of separatism, both in their teaching and practice. From this we have to conclude that the fact that each is moving in the direction of realising its ethical ideals in the transformation of Taiwanese society does not mean that either feels compelled to enter into dialogue with the other. Dialogue continues to be obstructed by the issues examined in Chapters Two and Three, especially the tendency towards theological exclusivism that is evident in both religious communities. It is in recognition of this inhibition that our research has drawn attention to the fact that Protestant contextual theology and 'Humanistic Buddhism' find significant convergence not in the domain of beliefs, but in their inheritance of, and interaction with the humanistic values of their shared Chinese cultural legacy. It is on this basis that the two religious communities may find a sustainable foundation for inter-religious dialogue that their respective emphases on realising the Kingdom of God and the Pure Land in Taiwan invites, but has not yet made possible.

## Chapter Seven

### Actualising An Ideal Society Together—An Approach to Contextual Christian-Buddhist Dialogue in Taiwan

#### Introduction

The purpose of this final chapter is to build on the evidence presented in earlier parts of this thesis, and to propose a contextual Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan that addresses the empirical situation of Christian and Buddhist communities, while offering a vision of the future that is grounded in contextualising trends within both communities.

The hypothesis on which this model is constructed can be simply stated: that the this-worldly focus that has emerged in the religious/theological thinking of the Humanistic Buddhist movement and the contextual theology of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan presents a parallelism that roots each tradition firmly in the Chinese/Confucian values of historic Taiwanese culture, and responds to the social needs of the whole of Taiwanese society in the rapidly changing conditions of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. This chapter will argue that these parallel developments of the realisation of the Pure Land and the Kingdom of God create a new opportunity for Christian-Buddhist dialogue in which the mutual suspicions that have distanced the two communities in the past can be replaced by shared commitment to the moral transformation of Taiwanese society through a ‘dialogue of social action’ that respects the distinct religious/theological identity of the two communities, but facilitates co-operation in the ethically pragmatic traditions of Taiwanese society, under-girded by a conceptual understanding of dialogue itself.

The development of the argument in this chapter follows the pattern that is evident in the approach of both Taiwanese theologian, C. S. Song, and the Sri Lankan theologian, Lynn de Silva. Each in his own way adopts a dialogical approach to Buddhism that explores doctrinal aspects; while they appear to give greater attention to the doctrinal similarities between the two religions rather than their differences, the approach in this chapter will attempt to strike a more accurate balance between convergence and divergence. Then, while recognising that doctrinal issues may divide religions communities, each seeks to explore the inner spiritual concerns that underlie such differences. Ultimately, they seek to apply doctrinal and spiritual perspectives to the practical dialogue of action and life, focusing on ethical and social issues.

Following this pattern the chapter focuses on a comparative discussion of the

doctrinal understanding of the realised Pure Land in 'Humanistic Buddhism' and the Kingdom of God in the contextual theology of the PCT. From this it will be deduced that, notwithstanding differences of doctrinal understanding, the two religions share a common vision of the transformation of this world according to the values of the ideal world. This entails the inward transformation of the human heart, that we may call 'the dialogue of spirituality,' and the outward transformation of human stewardship of the natural environment and of human society, that we may call 'the dialogue of social action' both provide a theoretical foundation for common action in the reformation of Taiwanese society. These are not proposed as separate categories, but as perspectives of inter-religious dialogue that penetrate and inform each other in a 'spirituality of action.'

From the perspective of these shared humanistic values, the chapter will then examine the contemporary social situation in Taiwan that calls for the attention of Christian-Buddhist dialogue. Since the 1980s Taiwan has been in process of transition from totalitarian dictatorship to democratisation. The deconstruction of old ideologies has resulted in disorder and confusion while a new social identity is being constructed.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, social problems such as the crisis of national identity, economic injustice, natural and environmental damage, the decline of moral standards, and the decay of social custom, have become urgent issues waiting for solution. These, it will be suggested, set out an agenda for Christian-Buddhist dialogue of humanistic concern.

While this aim of this entire thesis has been to develop an understanding of Christian-Buddhist dialogue that responds to the contextual values and needs of Taiwanese society, and may therefore be termed a 'contextual Taiwanese Christian-Buddhist dialogue,' it is important to avoid the danger of presenting this model of dialogue as being merely of local validity. As Shoki Coe, the architect of contextual theology, tirelessly emphasised, it is essential that every theological contextualisation should be informed by, and remain in critical debate with other contextual theologies. Therefore, the concluding part of this chapter will take account other views of interfaith dialogue that correspond with the approach that has been developed in this thesis. Special attention will be paid to the 'dialogue of global

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<sup>1</sup> The resources in this section adopts the writings of Chang Maukuei (張桂茂), Chen Fangming (陳芳明), Charles Kao (高希均), Huang Meiyin (黃美英), Lao Siguang (勞思光), Li Chao (李喬), Lin Benshyuang (林本炫), Nanfang Shuo (南方朔), Chiu Heiyuan (瞿海源), Yang Du (楊渡), and Yang Zhao (楊照). These figures cover the spheres of politics, economics, religions, sociology, media, and history.



responsibility' advocated by the US theologian, Paul Knitter.

### **Christian-Buddhist Dialogue Based on the Works of Previous Chapters**

Now that this program of research has come to its finality, a clear picture for potential Christian-Buddhist dialogue has been presented. This picture is expressed in the statement that the two religions' mission of social reformation has become a promising issue of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan. This proposal of a possible Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan is based on the work of the previous chapters. The following paragraphs of this section will advocate this direction of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan through reviewing several features presented in the previous chapters.

### **Inter-religious Dialogue—A Necessary Ministry in Taiwan**

Chapter One portrayed the historical development of religions in Taiwan, indicating that religions in Taiwan show distinctive pluralistic characteristic. This characteristic is developed from the syncretistic tendency of folk beliefs in the early period which encourage the co-existence of separate institutional religions later. This pluralistic characteristic demonstrates the necessity of inter-religious dialogue in Taiwan. It points to an issue of how, in this society of co-existing religions, religions should deal with their inter-religious relationships to both avoid conflict and even cooperate with each other in promoting the wellbeing of the Taiwanese people.

While studying the history of the Christian Church in Taiwan, Chapter One also demonstrates that, since the Christian faith's introduction to Taiwan, the Church has failed to recognise this pluralist characteristic of religions in Taiwan and has been hostile to the domestic religions. This attitude caused the Church to remain marginal in Taiwanese culture and society, and to be considered a foreign religion by Taiwanese people. Inter-religious dialogue therefore becomes an important means for the Christian Church's contextualisation. If Christianity intends to be recognised by Taiwanese people as indigenous, it must involve itself in inter-religious dialogue. Furthermore, because of the social transformations that happened in the 1980s, Buddhism underwent a revival and became the most prominent religion in Taiwan. Its primary position and doctrinal transformation caused the Christian Church to consider Buddhism as the primary subject for inter-religious dialogue. This revival of Taiwanese Buddhism also makes this research view Christian-Buddhist dialogue as the starting point of inter-religious dialogue for the Christian Church in Taiwan.

### **Current Condition of Christian-Buddhist Dialogue in Taiwan**

Although inter-religious dialogue has been proven a necessary task through investigating the characters of Taiwanese religions, the qualitative research presented in Chapter Two and Three shows that the practical situation of Christian-Buddhist dialogue is still in the initial stage and contains barriers as yet awaiting breakthrough. Compared with the previous stage, the current interaction between Christians and Buddhists certainly displays positive characteristics, including the improvement of previous tensions between the two religions and in their appreciation of each other, especially with respect to each religion's contribution to the society in their social ministries.

However, although some leaders and scholars in both religions have committed themselves to inter-religious dialogue and enthusiastically advocated this task to their religious adherents, practical application of inter-religious dialogue have been few and yet to be officially sanctioned or popularly accepted by the broader communities in the two religions. In general, the dialogues that have had the best acceptance are those of social action. The dialogue of doctrine and spiritual experience seldom happen and exist only in the scholastic sphere. Chapter Three has analysed some factors that impede the occurrence of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan. Besides lacking recognition of the importance of inter-religious dialogue, the barriers of Christian-Buddhist dialogue include the sense of uniqueness in doctrinal premise and doctrinal discrepancies between the two religions. These barriers show that contrary doctrines play a crucial role in hindering the dialogue between the two religions. Therefore, to promote Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan, one has to find an alternative approach outside the doctrinal dimension.

### **A Contextual Christian-Buddhist Dialogue in Taiwan**

Two Taiwanese theologians, Shoki Coe and C. S. Song, provide a constructive means in finding an alternative approach to Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan. Coe's thinking on 'contextualisation' and Song's 'establishing Asian theology in the soil of Asia' assert the importance of the contextualisation of the Christian Church and its theology in Taiwan. Their thinking also contends that the Church's dialogue with Taiwanese domestic religions is necessary in attempting to establish a Christian theology with Taiwanese features. Furthermore, they both elaborate that the Christian Church in Taiwan should establish a contextual inter-religious dialogue. This model of

dialogue, unlike Western theology, which focuses on philosophical presuppositions and contains strong metaphysical characteristics, should seriously consider the pragmatic and ethical approach, which is the approach best reflecting Taiwanese characteristics and meeting the current needs of Taiwan. Moreover, this is an approach most likely to overcome the barriers of doctrinal discrepancy. Nevertheless, though Coe and Song point out a direction for Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan, they have not worked directly on inter-religious dialogue, especially with reference to the context of Taiwan, because of their long absence from the country. They cannot provide practical examples of Christian-Buddhist dialogue, especially ones containing Taiwanese characteristics. To discover a contextual model of dialogue is the ongoing work of this thesis.

### **A Christian-Buddhist Dialogue with Humanistic Characteristics**

The second section of Chapter Four further asserted that, to seek a Christian-Buddhist dialogue with Taiwanese characteristics, one must seek the underlying cultural elements of Taiwanese people and these two religions. As a country with residents who are mostly Chinese immigrants from different historical periods, humanistic ethical characteristics presented in Confucianism are the common cultural elements of the Han Taiwanese and can be considered as the common ground of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan, since Confucianism has been the mainstay belief system of China for two thousand years. These humanistic characteristics include altruism, high moral attainment, and concern for this world. Although Confucianism has declined in its external form because of its perceived alignment the KMT government, Confucian elements of humanism have permeated the lives of Han Taiwanese and have become the core elements of Taiwanese religions.

Working within the humanistic characteristics of Confucianism, Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan may proceed in a direction where the two religions can cooperate in serving the interests of Taiwan. Not only does the exploration of elements in Confucianism point to this direction, but the study in the other chapters of this thesis also proves that a dialogue aimed at reforming society can serve as a promising model for Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan. While tracing the history of religions in Taiwan, Chapter One also divined pragmatism is another important characteristic of Taiwanese religions. This pragmatism means that people in Taiwan care more for the pragmatic value of religion to their present lives over metaphysical ideas and issues of final destiny. This tendency of religions is displayed

either in satisfying people's immediate desires and daily needs, or in providing an ideology to help people find meaning in their lives. This pragmatism proves that a dialogue focusing on people's this-worldly lives makes believers of the two religions more willing to work together.

The qualitative research in Chapter Three also demonstrates that the interviewees in the two religions find it easier to accept the dialogue of social action, especially for those interviewees who belong to the religious groups paying greater attention to the this-worldly wellbeing of people. These interviewees maintain that this form of dialogue does not contradict their own beliefs and meets their conviction of contributing to the wellbeing of society. Besides, the qualitative research shows that, among current events of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan, the dialogue of social action is the dialogue happening most frequently. These features in the empirical research provide evidence that a dialogue based on humanitism, which means enhancing humanity and promoting the cooperation between religious groups for improving human this-worldly wellbeing, is the most promising form of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan.

### **Humanistic Characteristics in Christianity and Buddhism in Taiwan**

The above statement suggests an elemental problem of whether there are humanistic characteristics existing within the two religions, which may become the common ground for inter-religious dialogue. Chapter Five and Six have proved that 'Humanistic Buddhism,' a contemporary Buddhist movement which has become the mainline Taiwanese Buddhist group, and the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, a Christian denomination containing forty percent of the membership of the Taiwanese Protestant Christian Church<sup>2</sup>, both experienced a transformation of doctrines and mission, and clearly present humanistic characteristics in their beliefs. These characteristics are particularly evident in the two religions' vision of devoting themselves to Taiwanese social reformation. The vision of the PCT is derived from the concept of actualising the Kingdom of God in the homeland, and in 'Humanistic Buddhism' is the fulfillment of the Pure Land in this world. Holding the beacon of social reformation, the two religious groups have actively participated in this reformation over the last few decades. The actions of the PCT were at first limited to

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<sup>2</sup> According to the statistic of Chinese Christian Evangelical Association in 2001, the members of PCT are 227,937, which are about 44% of the total 516,992 members of Protestant Church and 1,203 congregations, which are 38.5% of the total 3142 churches of Protestant Church. Information is from <http://www.ccea.org.tw>.

political movements with a later expansion into other spheres of society. In 'Humanistic Buddhism' the focus began with charity and environmental protection, moving later to a concern for structural social problems. These convictions and actions present parallels between the two religious groups, and therefore become a foundation of Christian-Buddhist dialogue. The above summation therefore comes to a conclusion that the parallel concept of the two religions, the Kingdom of God in homeland and Pure Land in this world, is appropriately adopted by this thesis as the main issue of the two religions' dialogue, which produces their dialogue of common actions for the reformation of the society.

### **Dialogue of the Concept of an Ideal World in the Two Religions**

#### **An Asian Procedure of Inter-religious Dialogue**

After demonstrating the promise of a dialogue based upon Christian concept of the Kingdom of God and Buddhist concept of Pure Land, the next step is to analyse how this common issue provides the common ground for Christian-Buddhist dialogue. The proposal for this dialogue works through three levels, which are the dialogue of doctrine, the dialogue of spiritual experience, and the dialogue of social action.

Chapter Four has indicated that the works of C. S. Song and Lynn de Silva provide the model for Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan. Although these two theologians individually developed their models of the dialogue, there is similarity in their procedures. These procedures include discovering possible parallel issue in the two religions, fleshing out the parallels of the issue, and actively applying this issue to people's wellbeing. Though Song and de Silva were not directly involved in inter-religious dialogue in Taiwan, the common situation in different districts of Asia still implies that the procedure of inter-religious dialogue developed by them can basically be applied to the context of Taiwan. Therefore, the steps to enact this model will be adopted here and presented in the next three sections of this chapter.

While adopting these steps, problems in Song and de Silva's model should be mentioned in advance. Chapter four mentioned that their works of inter-religious dialogue emphasise parallels between concepts of different religions, but often ignore their differences. However, a real dialogue must sincerely present the whole spectrum of a certain issue in the belief of each religion, and should not be afraid to face the differences and contradictions between the two religions. The dialogue below will rigorously adhere to this principle. The second section will initiate dialogue between concepts of the Christian Kingdom of God and the Buddhist Pure Land, inclusively of



their parallels and differences.

### **Christian Concept of the Kingdom of God**

The Kingdom of God stands as a main feature of Christian belief and is also the central issue of Jesus' teaching. Throughout Christian history, this issue also portrays a confusing picture, as different Christian scholars give divergent interpretations to its meaning. These discrepancies include a present or a future realm, an abstract idea or a concrete reality, and a purely ethical system or the transcendent rule of God. In spite of these various interpretations, there are some features which can be viewed as the common elements of the Kingdom of God.

The first element is that its basic meaning is the reign of God, who is the Creator and Savior of world and human beings. The reign of God here especially means the complete display and practice of God's attributes. Christian monotheism vigorously affirms the first element. Second, Jesus plays a critical part in the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God, whether this is interpreted to mean his death providing salvation, his life exemplifying the principles of God's reign, or his life setting an example for people as the children of God. Third, the Kingdom of God means a new world order, through which a society is constructed for people to acquire happiness and to dwell in peace. Although not all scholars agree that the Kingdom of God indicates simply an ethical system, ethical characteristics, which are based on Christian understanding of God's moral attributes, stand out as prominent features in the Kingdom of God. Fourth, the actualisation of the Kingdom of God has become a primary expectation of people, including both Israelites in the period of the Hebrew Bible and Christians after the period of the New Testament. Whether its fulfillment contains an eschatological dimension or not, the Kingdom of God signifies people's expectation for the fulfillment of an ideal world. Fifthly, the arrival of the Kingdom of God demands a transformation for people. The basic demands for response to the arrival of the Kingdom of God in the Bible are to 'repent and believe the gospel' (Mark 1:15, Matthew 4:17). The meaning of repentance is commonly considered as a transformation of the self so as to live a new life. Thus, personal transformation, building to the transformation of society, plays an important part in the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God.

Based on the above elements, the PCT's beliefs regarding the Kingdom of God hold some particular features. Chapter Six has indicated that, in terms of the actualisation of the Kingdom of God, the PCT tends to hold the perspective of its



progressive and dynamic element, claiming that it has already been presented in history yet needs to attain its complete fulfillment in the future. On the one hand, the PCT does not reject its eschatological dimension because its Confession of Faith still maintains faith in the final fulfillment of an eschatological Kingdom at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> While the other hand, the PCT pays more attention to its this-worldly characteristic, which is expressed by the Church's claim that its actualisation in this world and in the current context of Taiwan is the PCT's common vision. The PCT declares that the actualisation of the Kingdom of God does not entail the establishment of a visible and political Christendom in Taiwan, though the PCT paid attention in its social ministry to political movements. PCT maintains that the actualisation of the Kingdom of God means the furthering of God's spiritual and symbolic reign rather than the establishment of a political reality. The actualisation of God's reign in this world means pursuing a society which in every sphere collectively reflects God's attributes and principles, such as justice, peace, and love, so as to enable every person in society to enjoy his blessing. The PCT asserts that the actualisation of the Kingdom of God in this world is the primary mission of the Christian Church and therefore has been the vision and motivator of the PCT's ministry.

### **Buddhist Concept of Pure Land**

In traditional Buddhist beliefs Pure Land means Buddha's dwelling place, which is established when a Buddha attains his or her enlightenment. It is a place where Bodhisattvas and arhats listen to Buddha's preaching and practice the Dharma without disturbance. In the belief of the Pure Land Sect, Amitābha Pure Land stands out as the most tremendous place among other Pure Lands to become the common expectation of destiny for the Pure Land followers. All the Pure Lands that have been mentioned in Buddhist scriptures exist in realms outside the present world. Therefore, all the Pure Land's adherents have a basic tendency to withdrawing from this world, focusing mainly on seeking rebirth in that other-worldly place. This causes Pure Land belief to be become detached from this world.

The Pure Land belief presents a faith which depends on external salvation. This feature is best shown in the concept that the establishment of the Pure Land is completely dependent on the miraculous power of Buddha. People's rebirth in the Pure

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<sup>3</sup> The editing group of 'Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,' *Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, revised, Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2000, 135.

Land is largely dependent on nien-fo, calling on Buddha's name, to access salvation. Therefore, people do not directly take part in the establishment of the Pure Land.

The rise of the concept of establishing a Pure Land in this world signifies a revolution in traditional Pure Land beliefs. 'Humanistic Buddhism' moves the Pure Land from an other-worldly realm to this world claiming that the Pure Land should be established in this 'impure world.' Unlike traditional Pure Land belief, 'Humanistic Buddhism' asserts the importance of people's common works for the establishment of Pure Land. This provides a motivator for Buddhists to pay attention to their responsibilities towards reforming this world and promoting people's wellbeing. The establishment of this Pure Land is connected with Buddhist final destiny in two respects. The first respect is people's works of establishing a this-worldly Pure Land are practices of the Bodhisattva path, a Buddhist practice that is claimed by Humanistic Buddhists to be the most effective path of reaching Nirvāṇa. The second is that the establishment of a this-worldly Pure Land is meant to be a means for all living beings to practice Dharma easily. Therefore, while focusing their works on a this-worldly task, 'Humanistic Buddhism' does not give up Nirvāṇa as the human final destiny.

This transformation of Buddhist belief about the Pure Land has successfully provided the motivation for Buddhists in Taiwan to devote themselves to the reformation of society. Originating from the depiction of the Pure Land in traditional Buddhist scriptures, these actions include purifying inner human characteristics, purifying the environment, and establishing harmonious human relationships and social systems. 'Humanistic Buddhism' still retains the Buddhist concept of expecting an ideal world, only shifting it from an other-worldly realm to the present world and transforming people's passive anticipation for an external salvation to an active participation in its establishment.

### **The Differences of the Concept of Ideal World in the Two Religions**

The foregoing paragraph has pointed out that a genuine inter-religious dialogue should not only focus on the parallels between the two religions, but should also face their differences. Chapter Three has indicated that there are doctrinal discrepancies between Christianity and Buddhism. Therefore, the two religions' substantial and doctrinal differences unavoidably result in discrepancies between their concepts of an ideal world. As part of the dialogue of doctrine, their differences will be presented in the following paragraphs.

### Substantial Differences—Their Origins and Meanings

There are substantial differences in the two religions' concepts of an ideal world, indicative of the differences of their concepts of Ultimate Reality. For Christianity, the Ultimate Reality is of the one and personal God, who created and is sovereign over all his creation. For Buddhism, it is the Dharma, which is an impersonal principle embodied as Buddha. These two concepts of 'Ultimate Reality' are different not only in their names and in the monotheistic and atheistic concepts, but also in the two religions' perception of their attributes. Because of the differences in their concepts of the 'Ultimate Reality,' their concepts of the ideal world are not easily identified with each other. For Christianity, the Kingdom of God signifies the reign of God. For Buddhism, the Pure Land is the dwelling place of Buddha. Buddhists believe that 'the Kingdom of God' is only in the level of the heaven realms, and is far below the Pure Land, in a realm that has far transcended the six realms of Saṃsāra, because the Buddhist concept of God is solely relegated to the highest level of Saṃsāra. A simplified solution, as some religious pluralists such as John Hick's claim, is to interpret the 'Ultimate Realities' as one noumenous reality, which is perceived and expressed in different ways, because Reality is versatile and inexhaustible.<sup>4</sup> In this, God and Buddha in the two respective religions are actually the same figure recognised as different. However, this claim is not accepted by the two religious groups in Taiwan because, in their practical opinion, concepts of the Ultimate Reality in the two religions are widely different.

### The Two Religions' Final Destiny

The expectation of an ideal world also presents differences in the two religions' conceptions of final destiny. In Christianity, the Kingdom of God has always been the central theme, because this goal has been the human final destiny in Christian belief, whether its meaning is interpreted to be an ethical system in an earthly society, a new heaven and new earth established after the end of the present world with the second coming of Jesus Christ, or the symbolic reign of God throughout human history. The PCT continuously expresses that the actualisation of the Kingdom of God is their utmost concern.

In Buddhism, Pure Land is normally considered the medium for Buddhists to attain their final destiny, Nirvāṇa. As a means for Buddhist practices, Pure Land

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<sup>4</sup> John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, New York, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973, 131-132.

logically stands secondarily in Buddhist belief in its preparative functions for the final destiny. Even though current 'Humanistic Buddhism' regards it as the primary vision of Buddhist mission, the possibility exists that when the establishment of a this-worldly Pure Land is viewed as less valuable in attaining Nirvāṇa, the Pure Land might fall by the wayside. Furthermore, the final destiny in Buddhism is still a realm showing a characteristic of detachment from this world. The characteristic of withdrawing from this world does not completely disappear in 'Humanistic Buddhism.' Comparing Pure Land with the Christian goal of the Kingdom of God, it is clear that these two visions of an ideal world are still not in a parallel in their seeking of final human destiny.

#### Difference of the Place of Human Efforts in the Establishment of an Ideal World

Although both religions claim the importance of people's participation in the establishment of the ideal world, there is a difference between external help and self-efforts in this establishment. The PCT holds the view that God's salvation plays the crucial role of the arrival of the Kingdom of God, and its establishment was due to God's salvation fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Its complete actualisation is also the fulfillment of God's salvation at the Second Coming of Christ. It is the time between the initiation and the final fulfillment of the Kingdom of God when human beings have the privileges and responsibility to participate in this task. The PCT also conceptualises that, even in this period, the main resources of power to participate in this difficult mission are from the help of God and are closely related to human relation with God. Therefore, the PCT's conviction shows that the actualisation of the Kingdom of God is primarily through God's work with some reliance on human efforts.

Buddhists hold the conviction that there is no help from a Creator or Saviour, the establishment of a this-worldly Pure Land being solely through human effort. Although there had been elements of external help in traditional Pure Land beliefs, Humanistic Buddhists consider that this belief of dependence upon Amitābha's salvation to be deviant from original Buddhist beliefs, and therefore they claim the importance of returning to the belief in self-effort. The basic method motivates Buddhists to devote themselves to their ministry through self-cultivation. As a form of Buddhism, which was a tradition of syncretism between Chan and Pure Land, the most popular way for Taiwanese Buddhism to help followers to acquire power is through the practice of meditation. Numerous programmes for meditative training are

widespread in Taiwan. Another prominent way of acquiring power is through the experiences of practical action. All these ways maintains the importance of self-efforts and reject the possibility of external help, though Amitābha devotion still exists at the popular level of Humanistic Buddhists. The above analysis therefore argues that there are discrepancies between the two religious communities as to self-efforts and external help, and in their different ways of accessing the power while participating in the establishment of the ideal world.

### The Differences in Previous Actions

Besides the above conceptual differences, in early decades, the two religions proved their distinctive emphases in their practices of social ministries. The three political statements and related political movements described in Chapter Six have clearly shown that the PCT promoted active political concern after the 1970s. The reason that the PCT focused on this aspect of social engagement was the Church's conviction that the evils in the social structure are the origins of human suffering, and politics plays the crucial role among the different spheres of social evil. In order to eliminate human evils, political justice occupied the primary position of social action.<sup>5</sup> Although the PCT has expanded the spheres of their social ministry after the 1990s, the general impression held by Humanistic Buddhists of the PCT is that they are heavily involved in politics.<sup>6</sup>

Contrary to the PCT, Humanistic Buddhists place the transformation of human hearts as their primary ministry. Chapter Five indicated that this emphasis clearly expresses the conviction that the foundation of establishing a Pure Land in the current chaotic situation of Taiwan is the purification of human heart through propagating the Dharma. However, compared with the many efforts towards the purification of human hearts, Buddhist social ministry remains limited to the realm of charity works, without considering the deeper roots of social problems. Recently, Buddhist scholars such as Yang Huinan and Lin Chaocheng (林朝成), and monastic leaders such as Chaohui, have started to notice this shortcoming and have attempted to develop Buddhist social

<sup>5</sup> Chen Nanzhou, *The Social and Political Ethics of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, Taipei, Taiwan: Yongwang Publishing, 1999, 224.

<sup>6</sup> At least two Buddhist interviewees, Huiyang and Chaohui, expressed this impression in my personal interviews. Chaohui even kindly suggested that PCT should make efforts to eliminate this impression so as not to rouse suspicion. See Chaohui, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Hongshi Buddhist College (弘誓佛學院), in Kuanyin, 23 December 2002, and also see Huiyang, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in Fenshang Lotus Buddhist Society (鳳山蓮社), in Funshan, 9 December 2002.



ethics. But, these works are only in an initial stage and have not acquired tangible achievements. Besides, as a religion that emphasises the importance of harmony, Buddhism has always cautiously avoided actions that would arouse conflicts in society. Therefore, an image of striving for political rights through protesting and appealing is not accepted by Buddhism in Taiwan. This causes Buddhists to be suspicious of the PCT's active involvement in opposing the government and hesitant to have a connection with the PCT's social ministries.

#### **Conclusion—The Necessity of Transforming the Focus**

The above paragraphs have analysed discrepancies between the concepts of establishing an ideal world in the two religions. These differences are realities and, to a certain degree, the difficulties for Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan. Most of them, except the fourth difference, unavoidably precede the dialogue. While acknowledging these differences in other religions, can these two religions recognise and respect the existence of these differences? The above description indicates that the main differences between the two religions' concepts of an ideal world belong to the doctrinal sphere and pertain to religious final destiny. If the focus of the dialogue changes to the sphere of a this-worldly dimension, there are still parallels that can serve as the foundation for the two religions' common actions.

#### **The Parallels in Their Common Humanistic Characters**

Notwithstanding the differences mentioned above, there is still a promise of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in their parallels regarding actions of social reformation. These parallels are based on their commonly hope for furthering an ideal world. When viewing their hopes from the perspective of final religious destiny, their hopes of an ideal world contain discrepancies in their substance, in the ways of its complete fulfillment, and in the means of entering this realm. However, when viewing their hopes from a this-worldly dimension, there are parallels between the two religions. The following paragraphs will analyse these parallels of two religions' hope for an ideal world, especially from the aspects of the contents of this ideal world and of the common humanistic elements in it.

#### **The Parallels in the Contents of the Ideal World**

The parallels in the two religions' hope for the actualisation of the ideal world firstly show their common concept about this ideal world. According to the scriptures



of Pure Land beliefs, 'Humanistic Buddhism' clearly portrays the contents of the Pure Land as including the purification of the environment, the purification of human hearts, and physical abundance and mental happiness in a harmonious society.<sup>7</sup> Basically, these features can also be found in PCT's concept of furthering the Kingdom of God.

In the description of the condition of the Pure Land, the beauty of the environment, the magnificence of architecture, and the vitality and the harmony of nature not only attract people to long for gaining rebirth in it, but also provide Humanistic Buddhists a theoretical foundation and blue print for environmental protection. The concept of purifying the environment in 'Humanistic Buddhism' agrees with the PCT's concept of the Kingdom of God, especially with the significance of Creation theology, in which human beings are commissioned as stewards of God's creation and therefore must treasure and take care of the homeland.<sup>8</sup> Taking good care of our dwellings therefore becomes a common conviction of actualising an ideal world in the two religions.

The second feature of the content of the Pure Land, the purification of human hearts, is also in agree with the PCT's conviction of moral and ethical elements in the Kingdom of God. For 'Humanistic Buddhism,' cultivating the purity of human hearts is a crucial path for Buddhists to acquire progress towards Nirvāṇa and towards the fulfillment of the Pure Land. In the PCT's concept, the actualisation of the Kingdom of God entails practicing God's moral attributes in the society. This concept especially refers to human beings' reflecting God's attributes in their individual and collective lives. Therefore, the moral and ethical elements play an important part in both religions' concept of the ideal world.

The third common feature is their searching for the mental and physical happiness of human lives. Physical abundance and mental happiness are part of the main features of the Pure Land. This moves Humanistic Buddhists to care for human interests, especially for the underprivileged, paying much attention to charity works. The PCT's conviction is based on God's love for the world and his justice, especially expressed in caring for the economically and politically oppressed. Therefore, the PCT focuses on seeking to establish a socially and politically just society, so that every

<sup>7</sup> Yinshun, *Pure Land and Chan*, rev. ed., Taipei, Taiwan: Zheng-Wen Publication, 1995, 9-15.

<sup>8</sup> Lin Chongming (林崇明), *Ecology and Faith (生態與信仰)* in *Taking Care of the Earth—Participating in the Establishment of the Ethics of Earth in Taiwan (看顧大地—參與建立台灣的土地倫理)*, Center for Taiwanese Ecological Theology (台灣生態神學中心文字組), ed., Tainan, Taiwan: Renkwang Publishing, 1996, 9-12.

person can have equal opportunities to achieve a better life. Although both religions have a different focus in their actions, they commonly hold the conviction that caring for underprivileged people, so as to help them acquire physical abundance and mental happiness, is their primary concern. Besides, Chapter Five and Six have presented later developments, which show that their actions are gradually becoming similar.

#### The Parallel in Their Common Humanistic Characteristics

The parallel of the PCT's concept of the Kingdom of God and Humanistic Buddhists' concept of the Pure Land is also evident in their common humanistic characteristics, which, as Chapter Four proved, are common characteristics of Chinese and Taiwanese culture. Chapter Five and Six have indicated that these humanistic characteristics are expressed in three features.

Firstly, the concern for this world is obviously shown in the two religions' emphasis on the this-worldly dimension of the ideal world. Traditional concepts of expecting an ideal realm in the two religions focused on their other-worldly significance in which they therefore ignored the present interests of society. The transformation of the two religions in the previous decades has changed this tendency. The this-worldly characteristic has stood out prominently in the two religions' social mission. This common dimension makes the two religions, though previously hindered by doctrinal discrepancies, discover a common this-worldly goal, which is to devote themselves to the reformation of Taiwanese society so that their compatriots can live better lives. Therefore, transforming the focus of the ideal world from the other-worldly expectation to a this-worldly dimension bridges the gap between their original differences.

Similarly, altruism is clearly expressed as the key factor in establishing the two groups' concept of the ideal world. With this establishment the primary goal of their ministries, both religions call for their followers to devote themselves to the construction of this ideal world. Those who respond to this call have to possess a strong altruistic spirit and must be willing to commit themselves to the happiness of Taiwan. Therefore, spreading the message of altruism becomes an important ministry in the two religions. This means, compared with other religions in Taiwan, these two groups express greater altruistic tendencies in their beliefs and actions. With this parallel element, the two religious groups can easily express their appreciation of each other's altruistic spirit and will be more willing to cooperate in the works bringing benefits to Taiwanese people.

Thirdly, high moral attainment stands at the centre of the two religions' concept of the ideal world. This characteristic is clearly expressed in the Humanistic Buddhist claim that the purification of hearts is a crucial factor for establishing the Pure Land. 'Humanistic Buddhism' starts with purifying human hearts, through which it seeks to construct a high moral model to be believed by in society. This formulation is very much in tune with that of Confucianism, as mentioned in Chapter Four. Although the PCT seems to focus more on actualising the Kingdom of God through the transformation of social structures, elements of moral requirements still play the role of motivating these actions. Moral attainment, which originates from God's moral attributes, becomes the driving force and foundation of the PCT's social actions. Furthermore, moral attainment is also expressed in the collective moral achievement of society rather than in an individual state. Though there might be different tendencies in the role of constructing an ideal world between the two religions, claiming the importance of high moral attainment becomes the common concern in the two religions and is considered an effective path to fulfill their goals.

#### Conclusion—Parallels Make Cooperation Possible

The above paragraphs therefore show that transforming the conviction of the ideal society to the dimension of this world provides the possibility of Christian-Buddhist dialogue. While focusing the conviction of the ideal world on a this-worldly dimension, there are parallels in the goal of their missions and in their actions of achieving it. These parallels provide the common goal of the reformation of contemporary society and the possibility of common actions. With this conviction of an ideal world and with so much in common, the Christian Church and Buddhism in Taiwan have the possibility of working together for the reformation of their society. Therefore, setting aside differences about final destiny and focusing mainly on the parallels of the this-worldly dimension, the Christian concept of actualising the Kingdom of God and the Humanistic Buddhist concept of establishing a Pure Land will bring about the possibility of cooperatively constructing a better society in the current context of Taiwan.

#### **Actualising an Ideal World in the Current Situation in Taiwan**

The first two sections of this chapter have indicated that actualising the two religions' concept of the this-worldly ideal world is the common vision of PCT and 'Humanistic Buddhism.' This vision leads to possible common actions of social

reformation in Taiwan. However, it has to be realised that these common actions are not achieved in a vacuous context. The practical situation in Taiwan has to be seriously considered so as to develop a realistic action plan that meet the needs of society. Therefore, the third section will briefly examine Taiwan's situation, especially in the period after democratisation. To give a comprehensive picture of this period is a complicated work and is not the main purpose here. This section only attempts to find out what the two religions can do to help the current situation of Taiwan and move it forward to an ideal society.

### **A Period of Deconstruction (解體) and Reconstruction (重建)**

Scholars and social observers analyse that the contemporary state of Taiwan is in a period of deconstruction and reconstruction.<sup>9</sup> The old centralised political, economical and ideological system has collapsed. A variety of perspectives and norms have flooded the society. From a positive aspect, this deconstruction of the traditional system has resulted in a society full of vitality. As Chen Fungming (陳芳明), a socialist and democrat in Taiwan, indicates, 'all the energies of the society burst out in this period...throughout the history of Taiwan, there is not a period when thinking, speech, and actions are so flourishing.'<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, this transition also brings social chaos and confusion.

The years from 1986 to 1990 CE were a crucial period of this great change, because critical political events, such as the formation of the first opposition party, the lifting of Martial Law, the lifting of the ban on publishing newspapers and journals, and the general reelection of central government representatives happened here. A senior media worker, Yang Du (楊渡) analyses that this series of political changes originated from the economic and social development of earlier years. He indicates that, in the 1960s and 1970s, Taiwan had grown from an economic system of

<sup>9</sup> The concepts of 'deconstruction' and 'reconstruction' are commonly expressed in the writings of social observers such as Lao Sikuang (勞思光), Nanfang Shuo (南方朔), Yang Du (楊渡), Yang Zhao (楊照). See Lao Sikuang (勞思光), *Legislation and the Release of Spelling (立法與解咒)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Sanming Books, 1991, 185-188; Nanfang Shuo (南方朔), *Sighs in a Mad Age (捉狂下的興嘆)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Sanming Books (三民書局), 1991, 9; Yang Du (楊渡), *The Years of Deconstruction and Split (解體分裂的年代)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Sanming Books (三民書局), 1991, 1-4; and Yang Zhao (楊照), *The Perspective from a Wanderer (流離觀點)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Zili Evening Paper Publishing (自立晚報出版社), 1991, 231-232.

<sup>10</sup> Chen Fungming (陳芳明), *The Prologue in The Perspective from a Wanderer (流離觀點)*, Yang Zhao, Taipei, Taiwan: Zili Evening Paper Publishing (自立晚報出版社), 1991, 1. The Chinese is: '社會內部所蘊藏的能量都將在這個時期併發出來...在整個台灣史上,從來沒有一個時期像現階段這樣,思想,言論與行動是如此蓬勃.'

agricultural production and manual trade to an industrialised society. During this development, traditional political and social models were unable to meet demands of new society. Therefore, there were contradictions between the new economic and social realities and the old model of political control.<sup>11</sup> Potential civic powers rose to demand the reformation of the political system, the reconsideration of national identity, and the reconstruction of social and cultural value systems. The political liberation in the 1980s became the landmark of this reformation. Together with the collapse of the traditional political system came the deconstruction of traditional values and social systems. Taiwan has entered a transitional stage and awaits reconstruction in every sphere so that it keeps up with the contemporary era. This transition unavoidably results in vast changes to the social value system creating brand new social problems.

### **The Deconstruction of the Social Value System**

#### **The Deconstruction of Ideology**

The first feature is that the termination of KMT totalitarian rule brought about the collapse of traditional ideology. Chapter One and Four indicate that Confucianism had been the main value system of Chinese and Taiwanese culture. The way in which the KMT established the legitimacy of its regime was to claim national identification with China and to advocate the restoration of Chinese culture, which subsequently meant the restoration of Confucianism. This entailed that, although considered shallow and empty, Confucianism provided the main ideology of Taiwanese values for in decades while providing social stability and individual guidance. However, along with resisting the KMT's totalitarian rule, Confucianism in its external form aroused suspicions and warned up losing its dominance place after democratisation. The loss of the traditional ideology caused Taiwanese people to abandon the spirit of altruism, which has been one of the humanistic characteristics in Chinese culture, and gradually to move forward to secular materialism. People were unenthusiastic about committing themselves to any ideology, preferring only to strive for power and money. The loss of ideology causes apathy towards the common interests of each other's needs, with a focus only on material interests. This tendency also leads to political corruption and economic injustice, which will be described below.

#### **The Descent of Morals**

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<sup>11</sup> Yang Du (楊渡), *The Years of Deconstruction and Split (解體分裂的年代)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Sanming Books (三民書局), 1991, 4-8.



The loss of ideology also causes the decline of morals in people's lives. As mentioned in Chapter Four, a high moral requirement is an important humanistic element of Confucianism, although the KMT government's advocacy of Chinese culture is often criticised as empty. The moral norms declared by Confucianism still display their influences in restraining people's daily lives and in maintaining the stability of the society. The decline of Confucianism causes the decrease of its moral influences. When the old moral norm cannot restrain people's lives any more, and without a new moral norm to replace it, the society shows a situation of moral disorder. A social analyst, Nanfang Shuo (南方朔), indicates 'since there is no God (ideology), everyone does as he/she likes.'<sup>12</sup> This moral disorder not only is evident in personal lives but also in the collective situation. Charles Kao (高希均), an economic scholar, indicates that in the 1990s Taiwan was in a state, where the 'original criteria of right and wrong, the principle of promotion and demotion in the government, the norm of law, and the morality and ethics, which was respected by everyone, are completely overturned.'<sup>13</sup> This loss of moral consciousness results in political corruption, economic injustice, and disorder of public security. Therefore, Lao Siguang (勞思光), a sociological scholar, calls Taiwan a city of decay (朽壤之城).<sup>14</sup> This designation might be too harsh for Taiwan, but serves to point out the urgency of reconstructing its moral norm.

#### The Inconsistency between Pluralistic Reality and Centralised Consciousness

There is also the incapability of adjustment from a centralised system to the co-existence of plural cultures. In previous decades, Taiwan was in a situation where one political entity, the KMT government, and one ideology, Confucianism, dominated the whole society. This centralised system produced a closed but stable society. After the deconstruction of the original centralised system, multi-cultures brought vitality to the society. However, as Yang Zhau (楊照), a social observer, claims, though there might be various voices in the society, the consciousness of centralisation is still strong in people's minds. There is no respect or tolerance for different voices, leading the spirit to sense the value of pluralism, but an attempt to

<sup>12</sup> Nanfang Shuo (南方朔), *Sighs in A Mad Age* (捉狂下的興嘆), Taipei, Taiwan: Sanming Books (三民書局), 1991, 34. The Chinese content is: '上帝不存在, 一切皆可為.'

<sup>13</sup> Charles C. H. Kao, *The Path of New Taiwanese—To Construct a Clear Society*, Taipei, Taiwan: Commonwealth Publishing, 1999, 192. The Chinese content is: '大家所尊重的是非標準, 用人原則, 法律規範, 道德倫理, 受到了空前的顛覆.'

<sup>14</sup> Lao Siguang (勞思光), *Legislation and the Release of Spelling* (立法與解咒), Taipei, Taiwan: Sanming Books, 1991, 3.



compete with other voices in making absolute their own thinking.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, in the face of social and political discrepancies, there is always resistance and opposition rather than communication and compromise. This brings about conflicts between different groups or value systems, and making originally stable and harmonious society disturbed and disordered.

### The Discrepancy of National Identification

The discrepancies over national identification has invisibly existed in Taiwanese people and is exposed with the deconstruction of the traditional political system. Chapter One and Four both indicate that, in order to legitimatise its regime, the KMT worked hard to make Taiwanese people identify themselves with China. However, this attempt at Sinonisation proved unsuccessful because of the distance of Taiwan from China in time and space. Moreover, the disappointment over the KMT's totalitarian rule and the discontent with the government's focusing on the preparation of militarily regaining Mainland China with resources of Taiwan also weakened Taiwanese people's identification with China. Therefore, reconsidering the self-identity of Taiwan, rather than identifying themselves with a distant realm, has become the current tendency of the Taiwanese people.

However, this tendency of seeking self-identification brings about a rift in Taiwan. For about two million mainlanders, to cut their national identification from China means to lose their roots, which for them is intolerable. Furthermore, the claim that the KMT is a foreign regime, which oppressed the Taiwanese people, brings about tension and conflict between mainlanders and the earlier residents. In addition, as the biggest ethnic group, the people originally from South Fukien (閩南) arrogantly identify Taiwan with the race and culture of South Fukien. This perspective brings about the discontent of other minority ethnic groups, such as Hakka and aborigines.<sup>16</sup> The confusion of Taiwanese self-identification results in the split between different ethnic groups. Defining the meaning of 'New Taiwanese (新台灣人)' and establishing a new identity for Taiwan becomes an important issue for all the Taiwanese residents.<sup>17</sup>

### Social Problems Resulting from the Deconstruction of the Value System

<sup>15</sup> Yang Zhao (楊照), *The Perspective from a Wanderer (流離觀點)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Zili Evening Paper Publishing (自立晚報出版社), 1991, 215.

<sup>16</sup> Li Chao (李喬), *The Ugly Appearances of Taiwanese People (台灣人的醜陋面)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Qianwei Publishing (前衛出版社), 1988, 135-158.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

The transformation of society brings about the deconstruction of the original value system. This change is viewed as a necessary process for transforming the situation that matches the path of contemporary era. However, the preceding paragraphs have indicated that the deconstruction of traditional values unavoidably causes disorders of human consciousness, which results in many social problems. The following paragraphs will present some of these problems from different aspects.

#### Political Corruption Due to Incomplete Democratisation and the Loss of Ideology

Taiwan is always proud of its moving through the process of democratisation without experiencing military revolution and severely violent conflict. Nevertheless, although an initial democratic system has been established, Taiwanese has not cultivated a mature democratic consciousness yet. This is principally shown in the people's remaining in the Confucian political philosophy of expecting the appearance of a 'sage king' to bring about the country's benefits. Being in a democratic society, when a politician is considered a 'sage king,' all political powers will be rendered to him without considering whether a good operating political system and a balance between power and duty are more important.

Political parties do not recognise that the spirit of democracy is following the 'playing rules' and respecting people's choice in an election. Since winning the election means winning unlimited power, all the parties make every effort, legal or illegal, to win the election. After the results of the elections, there are usually conflicts arising which bring about social disturbance. This means that whenever there is an election, there is always division and opposition between different political or social groups in Taiwan.

The loss of ideology and the lack of an appropriate operative political system ensure political corruption, such as the collusion between government officers and private businesses, and illegal lobbying. This situation happened when the KMT held power and is believed to be without change after the transition of regime. In this situation, to cultivate the consciousness of democracy, to establish a completely operative political system, and to formulate a legal political system are important tasks in eliminating political corruption and social conflicts.

#### Social Disorder Due to the Loss of Ideology and Political Conflicts

There are also social disorders during this period of transition. Firstly, the descent of morals and the loss of ideology corrupt social customs and bring about the

deterioration of public security. Politeness and friendliness, which had been cherished as the virtues of Chinese culture, are not the norms for human relationships any more. Worse still, the political corruption mentioned in the last paragraph serve as bad examples for the whole society, which 'legalise' and 'rationalise' illegal and immoral behaviours on the popular level. The increase of illegal events and criminal acts worsens public security and makes people live in distress and despair.

The preceding paragraphs has indicated that the confusion regarding Taiwan's self-identification brings about the arrogance of Fukien-originated Taiwanese, the suspicion of mainlanders, and the discontent of other minor ethnic groups. This situation causes the conflicts within Taiwanese society, and shows the necessity of redefining the meaning of 'Taiwanese,' so as to acquire a new national identity among different ethnic people and the reconciliation of their relationships. Before achieving this goal, the intimidation of the PRC and the opposition caused by diverse political standpoint about the independence of Taiwan, enlarged the fissure between ethnic groups. This confrontation between different political standpoints reached a climax in the presidential election in 2004 CE. The division made in that election will take long time to heal. The above conditions become the two most crucial factors of social disorders in Taiwan. To deal with reformation of social values, it is necessary to reconstruct ideology and morals. To achieve reconciliation between ethnic groups, forgiveness, tolerance, and mutual trust are indispensable. Both of these tasks are complicated and difficult, but they are also pressingly urgent.

### Economical Decline and Its Influences

Taiwan also faced an economic crisis that previous decades had never encountered. The economic growth of China and the failure to upgrade industrial technology produced an economic recession the last two decades. Many businesses moved to China and Southeast Asia to acquire cheaper labour creating a rise in the unemployed rate. Lots of domestic labours feared losing their jobs. In reality, although the economic development in Taiwan has declined, the real situation is not such a bad way. However, since the previous economic development made people accustomed to luxury and material comforts, when the standard of living descends, people feel frustrated and lose sight of the meaning of life. This condition shows that the real problem of economic decline is interior perception rather than external reality.

It's not only the loss of the value system that makes people seek material pleasures and be unable to stand the descent of the living standard. Myopic viewpoints

and the loss of diligence, another traditional Chinese virtue, cause people in Taiwan not to believe in seeking better lives through diligent works any more. Speculative investment in the stock and property market, and even illegal businesses became the most efficient ways to amass wealth. This situation brings about an unjust economical structure and enlarges the disparity between the rich and the poor. The disappointment with social and economical justice deepens people's discontent with society and the government, and therefore increases the unrest mentioned in the last paragraphs.

Injustice in economic structures has already existed in the past and caused the underprivileged to have been ignored. While industrial development has declined and economical injustice worsened, the situation of the underprivileged becomes dire. The solution to the external factors of economical decline might depend on the government's new economical policy. Internal reformation is also necessary in helping people to pass through this crisis.

### Ecological Destruction

Ecological and environmental destruction becomes an issue related to economical development and it is especially alarming in Taiwan. These ecological problems have existed invisibly for many years and have become exposed recently. Like many other Third World countries, Taiwan's ecological problem basically originated from a previous sole focus on economical development while ignoring the ecological damage it brought about. In recent years, all the problems of ecological destruction became suddenly apparent. These problems include the pollution of river and reservoir due to not properly treating industrial and agricultural waste water, acid rain caused by air pollution, garbage treatment because of the overuse of plastic articles, shortage of electrical power and debates about building nuclear power stations, and issues of soil conservation caused by the over-development of mountain areas and the over-logging of forests. Besides the lack about consciousness of environmental protection in the past, the residents' lack of regard for public affairs, for respecting nature, and for caring for human beings aggravate the environmental problems. There are buildings built with steel containing radiation and with concrete made with sea sand. There is rice with cadmium content. People's torture of this lovely land makes Taiwan a country of high income, with a poor living environment.<sup>18</sup> To re-identify with the homeland and love its resources become an urgent issue in solving Taiwan's

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<sup>18</sup> Charles C. H. Kao, *The Path for New Taiwanese—To Construct a Clear Society*, Taipei, Taiwan: Commonwealth Publishing, 1999, 16-17.

environmental problem.

### **Conclusion—the Role of Religion in the Current Situation**

The situation of Taiwan portrayed above does not mean there is no positive features during this period of transformation and self-adaptation. The reason this section focuses mainly on the negative situation is to consider what Christianity and Buddhism can do to help society in achieving its tasks of reconstruction. Religions need to hold the conviction that, in light of the current disorders of Taiwan, there must be some spheres to which religions can contribute. Nevertheless, while considering how religions can contribute in helping Taiwan to get through this period of reconstruction, it is unrealistic to think that religions can solve all the problems of this society. An appropriate attitude is to consider how religions can play their roles and work with the whole society to achieve an immediate transformation.

The above portrayal has shown two aspects of the problems, the external and the internal. It also shows that, although there are many social, economical, ecological, and political issues which are closely related to the structure and systems of society, the fundamental problems at this period are the collapse of traditional ideology, the loss of the value system, and the descent of morality. These dimensions are where religions can make contributions. Therefore, reconstructing ideology and value systems can be considered the common goal of Christian and Buddhist contributions to the current society in Taiwan, and the starting point of Christian-Buddhist dialogue. Besides the reformation of people's inner consciousness, some participation in social movements, with which the two religions have already worked, also provides possible common grounds. The ongoing sections will suggest possible constructive action, especially from the dimensions of spiritual reformation and practical action.

### **The Dialogue of Spirituality and Social Action—The Reformation of Spirituality and Society**

#### **The Reformation of Human Spirituality**

As religions that contain abundant spirituality, this dimension of reconstruction of spirituality is what Christianity and Buddhism can together provide. Chapter Two and Three have indicated that previous Christian-Buddhist dialogue of spiritual experience in Taiwan pays more attention to sharing religious experiences of connecting with Ultimate Reality, and this direction achieved little results, because there is rarely a common concept of 'Ultimate Reality' in these two religions. Nevertheless, if the



dialogue of spiritual experience means to cooperatively reconstruct Taiwanese spirituality, which can be defined as the common goodness in humanity, this alternative direction becomes more promising and meets current Taiwanese needs. Former Taiwanese president Li Denhui (李登輝) has advocated 'The Reformation of Human Heart (心靈改革)' in the 1990s, pointing out the importance of reconstructing human consciousness for the reconstruction of Taiwanese society. However, without the foundation of spirituality, this movement did little to reform society. C. S. Song indicates that religions in Taiwan should be responsible for bringing human renewal and growth through spiritual renewal and growth.<sup>19</sup>

### Reconstructing Ideology through Providing a Blueprint of an Ideal World

The first aspect is to reestablish a Taiwan's ideology and its enthusiasm in caring for public affairs through advocating a vision of an ideal society. In Chinese history, Confucianism has portrayed the picture of 'The World of Unity and Equality (大同世界)' in the Book of Rites (禮記) as the vision of an ideal world. Together with Confucian humanistic characteristics, the condition of this ideal world provided the model and norms of Chinese people's social lives. The actualisation of this world formulates the common ideology of society and moves people to devote themselves to the collective wellbeing. When the traditional value system was deconstructed, the ideology formulated through the traditional concept of the ideal world was blurred. Therefore, as people lose their ideology and lean towards secularity, and focus only on seeking individual interests. To reconstruct the ideology of Taiwanese people, it is necessary to provide a vision of reestablishing the ideal world, so as to reaffirm the Taiwanese people's altruistic spirit.

It has been demonstrated that the two religious groups possess the well defined visions of an ideal world. The common characteristics and contents of their vision can provide a practical vision for Taiwanese people in which to reconstruct their ideology, which had existed in their Han culture but was lost over time, and therefore can become the source of reinspiration in their enthusiasm of caring for others.

In this dimension of spiritual reformation, some problems exist that await further solutions. In order to commonly advocate a vision of an ideal world properly connected with the current situation of Taiwan, these basic concepts wait for further development with respect to more practical concerns. Moreover, if the picture of an

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<sup>19</sup> C. S. Song, *The Believing Heart: An Introduction to Story Theology*, Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1998, 233.



ideal world is to be accepted by the two religions, and even then by the whole society, it has to be a reduction of their religious elements, such as setting aside the technical names used in the two religions, so that only the humanistic and moral elements stand out. Through sketching a blueprint for Taiwan's future, the two religions can inspire the Taiwanese people to abandon their selfishness and to rediscover their orphaned altruistic spirit.

#### Cultivating the Spirit of Altruism through the Compassion/Love in Two Religions

The second aspect in which the two religions can help to cultivate the spirit of altruism is by their public demonstration of caring for people's wellbeing, which is reckoned as their primary motivation for establishing the ideal society. The paragraphs in the third section have indicated that currently Taiwan is struggling in apathy and that people only care for their individual interests. The two religions both contain the spirit of caring for other people, which in Buddhism is the Bodhisattva Path originating from the example of Buddha's compassion to all living beings, and in Christianity is the identification with the homeland from the example of God's incarnation and of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Chapter Five and Six have indicated that these elements in both religions are motivators for the followers of both religions to show their compassion and love for Taiwanese people. In a selfish society, witnesses of an altruistic life style will bring inspiration to the Taiwanese people and stir their spirits of altruism.

#### Lifting the Moral Standard

The third aspect of spiritual reformation is the reaffirmation of people's morals. The third section has indicated that the loss of ideology causes the decline of morality and the decay of ethical customs. Morality stands in a prominent place in both religions' concept of actualising the ideal world. Master Shenyang claims that Vinaya is the important path for the purification of human hearts and the purification of society.<sup>20</sup> He also indicates that the observance of the Vinaya must consider the contextual situation, meaning that the inner moral conscience is more important than the external norms.<sup>21</sup> The Christian concept of the Kingdom of God also strongly emphasises the place of moral attainment, which is based on God's moral attributes and is the Christian motivation for actualising the Kingdom of God. In both cases, the

<sup>20</sup> Shengyen, *Vinaya and the Establishment of the This-Worldly Pure Land* (戒律與人間淨土的建立), in *This-worldly Pure Land and Modern Society* (人間淨土與現代社會), editor, Huiming (釋惠敏), Taipei, Taiwan: Dharma Drum Cultural Inc, 1998, 48-52.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 32-38.

realisation of these moral attributes is the key to this ideal world. Therefore, the two religions' consciousness of high moral attainment serves as appropriate tools in championing the morality in Taiwan.

#### Establishing a New View on the Value of Life

The fourth aspect is to provide Taiwanese people a different view on the value of life. The loss of social consciousness has driven people to materialism. Taiwanese people view the meaning and purpose of their lives as being the pursuit of material interests, wealth, and life of luxury. Besides eroding the social customs and upsetting public security, this sense of the meaning of life makes people feel frustrated during the time of economic decline. While the economical situation is not as successful as the previous period, many people can not bear this prospect of loss and therefore choose to make money through illegal methods. This situation results in many tragedies, such as dysfunctional family and suicides. Therefore, Taiwanese people need to reexamine the value and meaning of their lives from a new perspective, so as to help them to overcome the current distress.

In Buddhism, viewing the phenomenal world from a different perspective is the essential concept of wisdom. Christian faith tends to transform the dissatisfaction by providing a higher purpose for their lives. Although the two religions tend to solve Taiwanese dissatisfaction through different approaches, they can commonly help Taiwanese people at least realise their distressful situation from a new perspective and hopefully build up a more optimistic view of life, to help guide them through current difficulties.

#### Ways of Achieving the Reformation of Spirituality

The above paragraphs list four aspects of spiritual reformation that can meet the current needs of Taiwanese society and the two religious groups can commonly provide. The following paragraphs then turn to the issue of how the two religious groups can help in achieving this spiritual reformation. There are three aspects of action including propagating the convictions of spiritual reformation, providing living examples of spiritual reformation, and participating in common actions of social reformation.

The first aspect is to propagate the convictions of spiritual reformation, with special emphasis to the four aspects listed above. Chapter Five and Six have indicated that propagating the faiths of each religion and their visions of ideal world have been

the main task of the two religious groups. However, to commonly advocate a vision of an ideal world properly connected with the current situation of Taiwan awaits further practical development. The two religious groups preach messages that help people to reexamine their perspective on their lives with the aim of achieving a new lifestyle. In his speeches, Shenyang delivers practical messages, such as ways of eliminating troublesome--facing, accepting, dealing, and then putting down, and the ways of attaining a harmonious society—diligence, thrift, family love, and duty.<sup>22</sup> William Lo (Lo Jonkuang), general secretary of the PCT General Assembly, writes in his books, 'Praying for Taiwan (爲台灣祈禱),' advocates three Christian elements: faith—placing the trust in 'Ultimate Reality,' righteousness and justice, and other people; hope—optimistically expecting and being assured of a better future; and love—establishing sense of caring and supporting each other, and protecting the underprivileged.<sup>23</sup> These visions and messages have been spread to the people by the two religions. To strengthen their influence, unified actions are needed in propagating these convictions.

An effective method of achieving people's spiritual reformation is presenting the two religions' ideology through leaders and lay believers' testimonies on living a different way of life. This is because, in a society full of information and cognition, a more inspiring and convincing way of establishing Taiwanese people's ideology is to spread these concepts through practical examples. If the two religions' followers present complementary, but different views on their values and morals in their daily behaviour, their examples can inspire other people of the society to help them to establish a new perspective on life. A typical example of this is the compassionate and sacrificial life of Chengyen, the founder of Tzuchi. Through her life examples, she has garnered the respect of the whole society in Taiwan. Under her guidance, Tzuchi's followers have contributed to the reformation of customs in the society and have formed a trend of social altruism.<sup>24</sup> Longstanding actions of caring for the

<sup>22</sup> Shengyen, *Enlightenment: The Reformation of 'Heart' (啓蒙: '心'五四運動)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Dharma Drum Cultural Inc, 2000, 46-50 and 32-36. The Chinese text is: '處理棘手問題要面對它,接受它,處理它,放下它,' and '建立和諧社會要安心,安身,安家,安業.'

<sup>23</sup> William Lo (羅榮光牧師), *Praying for Taiwan: The Collection of Rev. Lo Jonkuang (爲台灣祈禱: 羅榮光牧師文集)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Wang Chun Fong Publishing (望春風出版社), 2001, 149-151.

<sup>24</sup> Lu Huisheng (盧蕙馨), *The Characteristics of Tzuchi's Modern 'Non-Temple Based' Buddhism (佛教慈濟功德會'非寺廟中心'的現代佛教特性)* in *Essays of Temples and Popular Culture Conference (寺廟與民間文化研討會論文集)*, Taipei, Taiwan: Council for Cultural Affairs, Executive Yuan (行政院文化建設委員會), 1994, 728-729.

underprivileged people also help the PCT acquire a good reputation in Taiwan.<sup>25</sup> These examples show that when religious people reject the trend of materialism, their life examples actually cultivate people's ideology and inconspicuously correcting the values of society. Therefore, the PCT and Humanistic Buddhism's cooperation in commonly advocating new ways of life will be helpful in the spiritual reformation of Taiwanese people.

The third aspect is the two religions' cooperation in their social action. Besides their religious followers' individual examples, common action of charity and rescue works not only provide for the needs of numerous underprivileged people and victims, but become a living example to teach the greater masses of society. A typical example is the emergence relief after the 9/21 earthquake in 1999 CE. Public religiously-motivated actions in saving the victims urged more people to care for these earthquake victims. There are other practical examples related to religious common social actions and to be described in the second part of this section.

### **Common Actions of Social Reformation**

Besides seeking the spiritual reformation of Taiwanese people so as to reconstruct the ideology, it is also appropriate for the PCT and 'Humanistic Buddhism' to become active in helping the physical reformation of Taiwanese society. Common action working towards social reformation in Taiwan is another important dimension of dialogue for the two religious groups, because they have both actively participated in social ministries in previous decades. This does not mean that the two religious groups have the capability to participate in all the spheres of social actions in Taiwan, but actions listed in the following paragraphs are those that two religious groups have already engaged in individually. Therefore, these actions contain possible starting points for Christian-Buddhist dialogue of social action.

### **Establishing a Harmonious Relationship between Ethnic Groups**

The foregoing paragraphs indicate the crisis of division between ethnic groups in Taiwan. Differing perspectives of the history of Taiwan, experiences of previous oppression in the totalitarian period, and divergent viewpoints in seeking Taiwan's national identity resulted in tensions between different ethnic groups. The split was often enlarged when the elections for government offices were held, and was

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<sup>25</sup> Huang Maiying (黃美英), *The Fault of Taiwanese Culture* (台灣文化斷層), Taipei, Taiwan: Daoshiang Publishing (稻香出版社), 1990, 32.

heightened in the presidential election of 2004 CE. The gap between ethnic groups has become a time bomb, which may explode at any time and bring about an uncontrollable destruction in the society. Considering the severity of this ethnic problem, there has been a call for 'Great Reconciliation (大和解)' in Taiwan. The formation of the 'New Taiwanese (新台灣人)', a united ethnic group including all the current residents no matter what are their original ethnic groups or arrived date in Taiwan calls reconciliation very important in solving the ethnic conflicts of this society. But sadly, these voices are weak and usually drowned out by political passion.

At this moment, it is the responsibility of religions to promote the concept of ethnic reconciliation. Among the religions in Taiwan, the Christian Church and Humanistic Buddhist groups are considered to be more involved in the political affairs than other religious groups. Facing this invisible crisis, what Christians and Buddhists can do is to spread concepts of justice, love, forgiveness, and tolerance so as to heal this historical trauma. Based on the above convictions, the two religions can cooperate in holding activities promoting social harmony and providing hope of an ideal world in the collective consciousness. The two religious groups can also play the role of 'the son of peace' urging leaders of different ethnic and political groups to meet and, possibly bring about the reconciliation of their relationship.

In reality, some religious groups hold different political standpoints, which hinder the possibility of their cooperation. For example, the PCT conspicuously supports the DPP in elections and some main Buddhist groups quietly or openly support the KMT. In this situation, religions have to view the harmony of society as urgently, and be willing to make this a priority over the political tendency of each religious group. Therefore, to stand in a neutral position so as to provide a convincing advocacy of reconciliation is currently a way that Christians and Buddhists can commonly help to eliminate the opposition between the ethnic groups and prevent inner social chaos.

#### Common Actions of Caring for Underprivileged People—Two Dimensions

The economic development of the Nationalist period brought about the increase of wealth, but resulted in the instability of economic structures and the disparity between the rich and the poor. Recent economical decline has worsened the situation of economic inequality and greatly increases the suffering of underprivileged people. Therefore, those who are at the bottom of society should be the subject of primary concern for the two religious groups. There are two dimensions of this ministry in the Christian Church and 'Humanistic Buddhism' in Taiwan. One is the charitable works



that directly care for these underprivileged people, with the other being social movements, which appeal for the economic justice in the society.

The foregoing chapters indicate that caring for underprivileged people has been the traditional social ministry of the PCT and is the main task of Humanistic Buddhist institutions. From the quantitative aspects of scale and influence, Buddhism stands out prominently, but, based on the foundation of a long and abundant Christian social ministry, though with less financial and human resources, some Christian charitable institutes such as of the Eden Social Welfare Foundation (伊甸社會福利基金會) and The Garden of Hope Foundation (勵馨園基金會)<sup>26</sup> have gained a reputation for the depth and breadth of their works. The cooperation of Christian experience and Buddhist resources will bring about much greater influences in their charity.

It is regrettable that, though both religions pay attention to ministries of caring for underprivileged people, these institutions of social ministries seldom share their experiences and often compete in these common missions. Rev. Zhou Lianhua, the president of World Vision in Taiwan, mentioned that though the two religions both established institutions in helping drug addicts and are physically situated next to each other, they have never made any connection or shared resources to promote drug abstention,<sup>27</sup> showing that the cooperation of charitable works between the two religious groups awaits further development.

Since the 1970s, seeking social and economic justice through social movements for underprivileged classes such as farmers, labours, and aborigines, has been the main concern of the PCT. These consistent works helped the PCT gain recognition and admiration from social activists outside the Church. Despite holding a perspective that harmony is one of the most important individual virtues for social relationships, Taiwanese Buddhists traditionally adopt a suspicious attitude towards the social or political movements. Recently, a few Buddhists have started to participate in social movements, such as the anti-nuclear movement and efforts to ban legalising the casino. Nevertheless, the appeal for social and economic justice through petition or protest is still a new experience for Buddhists in Taiwan. The experiences of Christian social movements in the PCT can supplement what Humanistic Buddhist lacks. However, to make more Buddhists recognise the importance of social movements requires still

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<sup>26</sup> Both Christian social welfare foundations obtained numerous awards in the past decades. The Garden of Hope Foundation just won the 'Asia Pacific Non-government Organisation' Award in September of 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Zhou Lianhua, interviewed by Jutta Pan, tape recording in the office of World Vision in Taiwan, 22 November 2002.



more effort. If Buddhists will accept that transforming social injustice is another path to improve the lives of underprivileged people, cooperation between Christians and Buddhists will bring far greater influences than their current achievements. The integration of the experiences of the Christian Church in social ministries and the abundant resources of 'Humanistic Buddhism' will bring about sweeping benefits for economically underprivileged people.

### Ecology and Environmental Protection

The preceding paragraphs have also indicated that focusing solely on economical development in the previous decades produced lots of ecological problems in Taiwan. Environmental protection has recently become an important issue and ministry in both PCT and 'Humanistic Buddhism,' because concepts of environmental protection are important elements in the two religious concepts of the ideal world. In Buddhism, there is the concept of the purification of the environment. In PCT, there is the concept of loving and treasuring our homeland, since it is the commission of God.

From the aspect of scale, the most influential movements in 'Humanistic Buddhism' are the Tzuchi and Dharma Drum Mountain. Although these organisations show great influences because of their abundant resources, recently there are critiques within Buddhism claiming that these works contain two problems. According to Yang Huinan, the first problem is that most of these works lack an insightful doctrinal foundation, being loosely based on the traditional Buddhist concept of 'cherishing the happiness (惜福).' Thus far, there were only a few scholars, who have started to propose a theoretical foundation for environmental protection based on Buddhist doctrines.<sup>28</sup> Related to the first issue, all the works of Buddhist environmental protection have remained shallow, such as the recycling of resources and the release of captured animals (放生), without touching upon more comprehensive aspects of structural environmental protection.<sup>29</sup>

Compared with Buddhism, the PCT has established a more complete theoretical foundation and a more comprehensive scale of practices. A Christian study group, The Study Center for Taiwanese Ecological Theology (台灣生態神學研究中心), has published a handbook on environmental protection, 'Taking Care of the Earth (看顧大地)' to advocate environmental protection among Christians. This book contains

<sup>28</sup> Yang Huinan, *A Review of the Concept of Environmental Protection in Contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism* (當代台灣佛教環保運動的省思), *Contemporary* 104 (當代), December 1994, 32.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

comprehensive contents including the theoretical foundation of Christian ecological ethics, current environmental problems and their urgency in Taiwan, practices of environmental protection in different spheres, and the plans and materials for educating and propagating the concepts and practices.<sup>30</sup> Besides, the PCT also consistently takes actions on issues concerning structural ecological problems, such as the anti-nuclear movement and protesting industries' waste water and poisonous gas. But again, the shortage of the resources is still a problem for the Christian Church in Taiwan resulting in the limited impacts of the PCT's actions. The situation is similar with respect to its economic ministries, in that the theoretical foundation and experiences in Christian Church need to be united with the resources in Buddhism, so as to rescue the ecological crisis in Taiwan. Both religious communities should gather to share their religious conviction and experiences regarding environment protection, to explore together the current problems of Taiwan's environment, and to cooperate in common actions of environmental protection.

### **Practical Suggestions for Christian-Buddhist Dialogue**

The preceding paragraphs have presented a proposal for contextual Christian-Buddhist dialogue through the concepts of the Kingdom of God and Pure Land in the dialogue of the conceptual sphere and practical actions. But how can this proposal move beyond a vision, and be transformed into practical actions? In his writing 'One Earth, Many Religions,' Paul Knitter, a Christian theologian who has devoted himself to inter-religious dialogue for a long time, raises the same question and gives some practical suggestions. This thesis considers Knitter's suggestions to be relevant in the practical process of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan.

### **Knitter's Dialogue of Global Responsibility**

Knitter considers the best way to carry out a multifaith dialogue is through a globally responsible dialogue, which means a dialogue based on a joint commitment to promoting the eco-human well-being of earth and humanity,<sup>31</sup> because he believes that 'all religions take on global responsibility as the central ingredient in their efforts to

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<sup>30</sup> See: Writing groups of the Center of Taiwanese Ecological Theology (台灣生態神學中心文字組), edit., *Taking Care of the Land: Participating in the Establishment of the Ethics of Land in Taiwan* (看顧大地: 參與建立台灣的土地倫理), Tainan Taiwan: Renkuang Publishing, 1996.

<sup>31</sup> Paul Knitter, *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995, 181.

understand themselves and other religious communities.<sup>32</sup> Knitter claims therefore that the 'dialogue', by which he means the conversation about the doctrine or spiritual experience, is a second step. The encounter should 'begin on the level of some form of liberative, engaged praxis.'<sup>33</sup> Though not completely based on the same theoretical foundation, there are parallels between Knitter's proposal for inter-religious dialogue and that of this thesis.

#### Four Cyclical Movements

Knitter's suggestions about practical movements of global responsible dialogue are appropriately applied here. Knitter proposes 'four spokes' or 'four movements' as the model of inter-religious dialogue. The first movement is compassion, which is the condition for the possibility of liberative dialogue. The dialogue of global responsibility has to start with participants of inter-religious dialogue feeling compassionate for those who suffer or for the earth, so that participants will be bonded to those who are victims, and to those who show similar compassion. The second movement is conversion, which is the real response of compassion. Compassion makes demands on participants' lives and on searching for others who are also seeking similar responses. This makes for a genuine coming together—a meeting of minds and hearts. The third movement is collaboration. The same concern makes members of different religious communities feel themselves called to act together. These actions include the analysis of the origin or cause of the problems they are concerned with, and therefore they take actions to solve these issues. The fourth movement is comprehension. Through the last three steps, participants can begin the task of comprehending or understanding each other. Having acted and suffered together, participants of different religions will now reflect and talk together about their religious convictions and motivations.

#### Dialogue Taking Place in Community

Knitter also points out that this dialogue of global responsibility can take place only in a community, a model he adopts from Christian communities in Latin America but claims that this must be expanded to a multifaith community. With this concept, Knitter claims that inter-religious dialogue can not be carried out by people who come together for a meeting in a specific place, but must be realised in a community of

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 138.

people who are coming together to act and reflect.<sup>34</sup> The spirit of the concept that Knitter indicates here is that inter-religious dialogue should not be a fragmentary or casual act, but has to be consistently and deeply rooted in the lives of the participants. Besides, through the formation of a community, participants can bind together and be related with each other. Knitter lists some examples in India and Sri Lanka to claim that this model of inter-religious dialogue works in some areas. An example includes the Dalit Dialogue in India, which is religious peoples' common concern for the suffering of Dalits, the outcastes, and striving for their rights. In Sri Lanka, there is the establishment of a community pre-school program for helping hearing-impaired children, which has been composed by people of different religious and the parents of children.

### **The Application of Knitter's Proposal to Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan**

The proposal of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan developed in this thesis is not completely based on the same theoretical foundation as that of Knitter's globally responsible dialogue, for the context in Taiwan is different from those of India, Sri Lanka, or South America. However, the parallels of the common claim that the dialogue of social action is the primary step of inter-religious dialogue results in the relevance of adopting many of Knitter's suggestions on Christian-Buddhist dialogue in the context of Taiwan. These suggestions include the practice of Knitter's four movements: religious communities' compassion for the struggles of Taiwanese people resulting from the issues listed above, participants' conversion of attitude regarding those who are struggling and thus finding solidarity with those caring for the same issue, working collaboratively to analyse the problem and to find compelling actions for its solution, and comprehending the religions' concept of humanistic concern by learning from each other. Therefore, if the issue noted earlier, have been raised by the two religious communities, who then take the first steps mentioned above, Christian-Buddhist dialogue on the practical level becomes promising. Knitter also seeks to remind us that this action of dialogue should be practiced through the formation of the community, which will always be defined differently in different societies, and this is also an important feature in the action. This idea suggests that the participants of the dialogue should relate closely with other participants and that the dialogue should happen consistently and rooted in daily life.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 144.

### **Caring for the Dignity of Life – A Dialogue Parallel with Knitter's Model**

While attempting to adopt Knitter's proposal as practical steps towards Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan, one should seek to discover whether there is a Christian-Buddhist dialogue already happening which displays similarities to Knitter's model, to serve as an example for further dialogue. Among the previous Christian-Buddhist dialogue events, the dialogue between Chaohui of Hornshi Buddhist College and Lu Jungyi of Dongmeng Presbyterian Church, in terms of their common actions of caring for the dignity of life, presents parallel to Knitter's four movements, and displays the spirit of long-term commitment by the close relation of their daily life.

Chapter Three has indicated that the common action between Chaohui and Lu is mainly in their common concern for the conditions in areas where the dignity of life has been spoiled. With their own religious background in mind, they both maintain the importance of respecting the dignity of life as being an essential dimension of their faiths. Holding this conviction, they display compassion for animals and are therefore concerned about the cruel custom of "chicken hunting", which is held by a folk belief temple. This common compassion makes the clergy of different religions unite together uniting for the care for these chickens. Their gathering eventually brought about actions of demanding the termination of this cruel custom, and through their perseverance, this program was abolished. The above action is inclusive of Knitter's first three movements. After this initial joint event, later socially conscious actions were carried out, and in every event, Knitter's first three movements are repeated in their common actions. Comprehension, the fourth movement in Knitter's proposal, occurs through the two religious communities' ongoing interactions, such as visits and sharing programmes for sharing the concepts of the two beliefs. Although there is no formal community formed, their interaction presents a continuity in their common actions and mutual interactions. Without realising beforehand the model provided by Knitter, this dialogue between Chaohui and Lu genuinely displays similarities with Knitter's model and exist as the pioneer action of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan in their actions on social reformation. The above description therefore marks a direction for Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan that can be carried out between existing communities of the two religions based on their common care for the wellbeing of Taiwanese people and through the processes suggested by Knitter.



### Conclusion

This chapter has outlined an approach to contextual Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan that attempts to overcome the mutual suspicions that have so far hindered the development of a dialogue between the two religious communities, and to present a way forward that respects their identities as separate religious communities while indicating how it is possible to co-operate in shared humanistic concerns.

The approach that has been advocated rests on what can be imagined as a two-level platform. The top level is the striking parallelism that has emerged since the 1970s in the contextualising trends of reformation within the Buddhist and Christian communities, with the growth of Humanistic Buddhism on the one hand, and of socially-contextual Christian theology on the other. While it would be ignorant of the doctrinal differences between these two movements to suggest that they are convergent, in the sense of moving towards a commonly-agreed goal, they share a common commitment to realising the ideals of the Pure Land and the Kingdom of God in this world, and thus share a common commitment to the transformation of Taiwanese society.

The lower level of the imagined platform on which a contextual Christian-Buddhist dialogue can be constructed is the legacy of Chinese cultural values that inform Taiwanese society, today as in the past. This chapter has argued that it is these values of this-worldly idealism, nurtured through altruism and moral improvement, that provide a bridge between the parallel movements of 'Humanistic Buddhism' and contextual Christianity. Precisely because these are parallels, they do not converge on a common point. Indeed, this chapter has given due consideration to their doctrinal differences. But it is the argument of this thesis as a whole that these differences are mediated, albeit unconsciously—and therefore at a lower foundational level – by the humanistic values of traditional Chinese culture that each shares.

This approach to Christian-Buddhist dialogue has been characterised as a 'dialogue of social action.' This prioritises the pragmatic nature of dialogue, distinguishing it from more intellectualist definitions that give priority to doctrines and theological debate. The empirical research on which Part Two of this thesis is based indicates that neither the Buddhist nor Christian communities in Taiwan are ready to engage wholeheartedly in such theological dialogue, although some beginnings have been made in theological institutes. This in part reflects a history of mutual apprehension and suspicion. In more positive assessment, however, it may also suggest that the pragmatic character of religious pluralism in Taiwan, which was



discussed in Chapter One, is impatient with a metaphysically-orientated dialogue that does not first address the pragmatic needs of Taiwanese society. In contrast therefore to the ancient Greek notion of dialogue as a form of philosophical debate, a Taiwanese approach to dialogue should, on the evidence of this research, emphasis its praxiological value: 'diapraxis' rather than 'dialogue.'

It has been argued, however, that this does not exclude a spiritual dimension. In Chinese culture the spiritual dimension of religions infuses issues of daily life as lived in this world. As has been demonstrated in the case of Confucianism, the transformation of this world to the ideals of heaven/Dao is brought about through the inner transformation of the human heart that is expressed in the values of altruism and moral achievement. This inward dimension is an important element of the contextual model of Christian-Buddhist dialogue proposed in this chapter, and it seeks to break down false dichotomies between the spirit and the world. Contextual Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan is therefore holistic in its analysis of the nature of society, of religion, and of human responsibility for the natural environment and human community.

As many Taiwanese who agreed to be interviewed in the course of this research made clear, there is little excitement in the idea of dialogue as conversation between two religions, among people who wish to find a common ground of doctrinal agreement. This may be a caricature of dialogue, but it is an empirically-proven reality that needs to be addressed. The model of Christian-Buddhist dialogue that has been proposed in this chapter, therefore, seeks to propose a different dynamic. A contextual dialogue in Taiwan should not present itself merely as a bilateral conversation between two parties; rather, by taking the Greek word *dialogos* in its literal sense, dialogue is a dynamic process through which each party (two or more) engages common social challenges "through" (*dia*) its respective faith-based view of the world (*logos*). The aim is to transform the world, in this case Taiwanese society as it undergoes its current dramatic transition from totalitarianism to democracy, and the struggle for national identity distinct from yet related to the People's Republic of China, both of which are accompanied by a collapse of ideology and a chaotic social situation. In dialogue, Taiwanese Christians and Buddhists each bring their spiritual and ethical resources to engage the social challenges that face them both. Rather than addressing themselves to these challenges 'monologically', each ignoring the contribution of the other, a dialogical approach entails each being open to the insights of the other, and willing to engage with the other in the practical struggle of social transformation. It is in this

sense that Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan gives priority to the dialogue of social action, and as Taiwanese Christians and Buddhist become more experienced in this dimensions, a 'dialogue of doctrines' in the bilateral sense of religious discussion between the two communities might eventually have it proper place.

## Conclusion

### Epitome

This thesis has offered an inquiry into Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan, and has reached four general conclusions.

Firstly, because Taiwanese society and culture have been steeped for hundreds of years in religious plurality, and have developed pragmatic means of co-existence, dialogue among religions is a way of forging a principled approach to religious pluralism that avoids the dangers of careless syncretism.

Secondly, because of its resistance to syncretism, Christianity in Taiwan has tended to distance itself from engaging with the religious plurality of Taiwanese society, with the result that it tends to be perceived by the other religious communities in Taiwan as foreign, and alien to Taiwanese culture. Dialogue therefore offers Christianity a way of integrating itself more deeply into Taiwanese culture and of indigenising itself as a Taiwanese religion.

Thirdly, amidst the massive changes that have been taken place in Taiwan since the 1980s, and the rapid growth of secularisation, there has been a tendency for Taiwanese religions to identify themselves as separate from each other, and to retreat into mutual isolation and competition, with the result that inter-religious dialogue is not considered very important, even if it is enthusiastically espoused by individuals.

Fourthly, given the pragmatic nature of Taiwanese culture, the form of inter-religious dialogue that is being most profitably pursued by individual Taiwanese, with greatest promise for its future applicability, is 'the dialogue of social action' that enables adherents of different religions to co-operate in the social sphere, showing that Taiwanese religions continue to have relevant contributions towards the betterment of Taiwanese society.

Within this general understanding of the need for inter-religious dialogue in Taiwan, this research has pursued questions that pertain specifically to dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism, the two most important religious communities in contemporary Taiwan. These questions have been considered primarily from a Christian point of view, as the researcher himself is an ordained Christian minister and committed to encouraging churches to enter into deeper and more co-operative relations with their Buddhist neighbours. In this regard, the most important conclusion to be drawn from the study of religious pluralism in Chapter One is that the churches have, as yet, shown little willingness to engage in inter-religious dialogue. Under

Western missionary influence in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, they have identified themselves against the pluralist and pragmatic traditions of Taiwanese religious culture, in favour of an exclusivist and other-worldly theology. This thesis has argued that this is one of the reasons why Christianity is perceived as foreign to Taiwanese culture, and remained marginal in Taiwanese society.

This conclusion, based on historical analysis and reflection, was confirmed by the qualitative research that has been reported in Part Two of the thesis. The evidence presented in Chapter Two demonstrates that, while Christianity and Buddhism show a broadly tolerant attitude to each other, active dialogue between them is impeded by mutual suspicion and indifference, and that initiatives taken by individual Christians and Buddhists have yet to stimulate support within their respective religious communities. These findings of the qualitative research, while giving a realistic impression of the actual situation, are complemented by others that give grounds for some optimism in terms of the future of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan. Many of the subjected interviewed in the course of the research suggested that the most productive way forward for Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan may lie in the realm of cooperative social action – the ‘dialogue of social action.’ They saw this as a practical way of overcoming mutual ignorance and indifference, and re-situating doctrinal differences in the sphere of shared socio-ethical concerns. While it was clear from the empirical evidence that such dialogue of action has hardly yet begun, it challenged the researcher to explore this possibility, both in terms of recent developments within the Christian and Buddhist communities, and in terms of a general theory of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan that responds to indigenous possibilities rather than simply borrowing models of dialogue from the west.

The Third Part of the thesis therefore undertook the task of constructing a theoretical approach to Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan that might commend itself to Christians and Buddhists as a way forward for the future. The argument was based on three premises.

Firstly, Chapter Four proved that dialogue with Buddhism represents an essential part of the search for Taiwanese Christianity to contextualise itself in the contemporary realities of Taiwanese society. Building on the insights of Taiwan’s first generation of contextual Christian theologians – Shoki Coe and C. S. Song – it has been argued that Christian-Buddhist dialogue, in order to root itself in Taiwanese culture, should embrace the ethical values that infuse that culture. These culture elements may be identified with Chinese tradition, or Confucianism, and involve

altruism, moral attainment, and concern for the betterment of this world. These representative values that are held by all Taiwanese, irrespective of the particular religion to which they belong, and inviting Christians and Buddhists to bring their spiritual and ethical teachings into a shared discourse rooted in the Taiwanese culture itself. In one sense, this is to appeal to the historic tradition of religious coexistence that has shaped Taiwanese society through the centuries, and it also identifies cultural element that gives specific character to the contextual nature of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan. It reminds Taiwanese Christians and Buddhists alike that bilateral dialogue in the religiously plural context of Taiwan needs not only to be open to other religions, but can be founded on a third reality: that of a shared Chinese-Confucian legacy of values that embrace all Chinese peoples. This legacy, moreover, is one that addresses both the personal nature of religious ideals, and their relevance to the public dimensions of the life of the whole of society. Invoking this legacy is not, therefore, an appeal to the past as much as a challenge for the future.

The second premise on which this thesis proposes for contextual Christian-Buddhist dialogue takes account of the very important transformation that has been taking place within Taiwanese Buddhism since the 1980s in the development 'Humanistic Buddhism,' based on the teaching of Master Yinshun. Chapter Five has offered a careful analysis of Master Yinshun's ideas showing that, under his influence, Taiwanese Buddhism is in process of transforming the traditional understanding of the Pure Land to focus on this-worldly priorities. This has resulted in a proliferation of Buddhist social services that are in various ways developing Master Yinshun's ideas through practical implementation.

Two conclusions may be drawn from this analysis that are relevant to the argument of Part Three. Firstly, while Master Yinshun does not explicate reference to the Chinese Confucian tradition, there is an implicit correspondence between elements of his ethical teaching and Chinese Confucian values. This may be one of the reasons, we suggest, for Humanistic Buddhism's popular appeal among the Taiwanese people. Similarly, Master Yinshun makes no specific reference to Christianity or Buddhist-Christian dialogue. But, to the degree that adherents of 'Humanistic Buddhism' may identify parallel, if not identical, socio-ethical concerns among contemporary Taiwanese Christians, it may be expected that 'Humanistic Buddhism' may dispose Taiwanese Buddhists to an interest in Christianity that was previously ignored.

Chapter Six pursues this last expectation further by examining the contextual

theology movement that has been an influential feature of the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan over roughly the same period as Humanistic Buddhism has grown in the Buddhist community. Our analysis has shown that what began as 'Contextual Theology' has succeeded in refocusing Christian understandings of the Kingdom of God in relation to the social and political challenges of Taiwanese society. This parallels the trends in 'Humanistic Buddhism,' and invites a 'humanistic' dialogue with Buddhism that promises to enhance the quality of Christian contextual theology by including the dimension of inter-religious dialogue. Once again, it must be admitted that the PCT contextual theology has not explicitly engaged this dimension thus far. For political reasons it has been critical of the appeal to Confucianism that was made by the former KMT totalitarian regime that the PCT so strongly opposed. It is important therefore to draw a distinction between Confucianism as an institutional ideology, and Chinese-Confucian values and ideals. If this distinction is granted, it is fair to point out that the socio-ethical emphases of the PCT contextual theology may be compared with the Confucian values that in here Taiwanese society, and to suggest that this is a genuine part of the contextualisation process as was the political opposition to institutional Confucianism that the KMT favoured.

The third premise of the argument in Part Three has been that the parallelism between 'Humanistic Buddhism' and contextual PCT theology creates an opportunity for Taiwanese Christians and Buddhists to build a practical dialogue around their respective approaches to the realization of the Pure Land and the Kingdom of God. Chapter Seven explored the similarities and differences between the two, and without trying to diminish the latter, argued that the parallelism is itself the basis for constructive dialogue. Given the comparison between the values of the realised Pure Land and the Kingdom of God on the one hand, and the this-worldly concerns of Chinese-Confucian values on the other, it can be argued, firstly, that Christian-Buddhist dialogue is rooted in common principles, even though Christianity and Buddhism elaborate these in different ways according to their respective systems of belief. Secondly, if it is accepted – as argued in Chapter Seven – that dialogue is not a question of two parties finding agreement on issues over which they differ, but that dialogue is a process of each partner bringing its *logos*-values to bear upon shared problems, engaging the latter through (*dia*) its respective belief systems, but in a manner that accepts the legitimacy of other religious perspectives in a religiously-plural society, it follows that Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan does not presuppose doctrinal agreement, but invites practical willingness to struggle



together with the challenges of Taiwanese society with the insights of Humanistic Buddhism and contextual Christianity.

The general theory of contextual Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Taiwan that has been argued in this thesis can therefore be expressed as follows. Contextual Christian-Buddhist dialogue responds to the historic tradition of Taiwanese religious plurality that respects the distinct doctrinal identities of Christianity and Buddhism, while encouraging each to affirm its cultural roots in the shared legacy of Chinese Confucian values, and to co-operate in a practical way that relate their respective ethical world views to the common task of reconstructing contemporary Taiwanese society in ways that are inspired by their visions of the realisation of the Pure Land and the Kingdom of God.

### **The Significance of This Thesis to Inter-religious Dialogue**

The ‘dialogue of social action’ that has been recommended in this thesis is firmly set in the context of every day life both of individual Christians and Buddhists, and of Taiwanese society as a whole. It is concerned with community. Its aim is to improve relations between the Christian and Buddhist faith traditions by encouraging co-operation in the social sphere of their common existence, enabling them together to contribute to the transformation of contemporary Taiwan. This kind of dialogue might better be termed ‘dia-praxis,’ in order to emphasise the praxiological character of the kind of engagement that is envisaged. At the same time, however, this thesis has not ignored the doctrinal differences between Christianity and Buddhism, least of all in terms of their respective understanding of the Kingdom of God and the Pure Land. The thesis has argued, however, that these doctrinal differences should not be allowed to remain a barrier to Christian-Buddhist dialogue. Rather, if dialogue is initiated on a practical basis, the real experience that Christians and Buddhists enter into together will come to have ‘praxiological’ value: i.e. praxis generates a shared experience on which Christian and Buddhist may reflect, together and separately, and which in turn provides a new context in which to discuss, reconsider, and perhaps reformulate the doctrinal issues that characterize the two religions. This has been termed the ‘dialogue of the word.’ It has been the argument of this thesis that such dialogue should not, and cannot be avoided, but that it should be placed in the context of the ‘dialogue of action’ that engages the social life of the community. Furthermore, it is within this approach to the dialogue of the word within the framework of socially-focused dialogue that it is possible for each religion to ‘witness’ to the other, in the sense of sharing its

understanding of Truth. This is no longer an adversarial approach to witness and proclamation, but one that relates them both to the challenge of reconciliation and community building.

It is the considered opinion of this research that such an approach to dialogue has the probability of commending itself to the Christian and Buddhist communities in Taiwan. It promises to overcome the problems of mutual suspicion that have alienated the two communities in the past, and continue to cause tension today. It invites each community to see the other as equally committed to the reconstruction of Taiwan society. As Taiwan continues to undergo its profound change with its rapid economic growth, traditional society is in many ways collapsing leaving most Taiwanese increasingly living in a spiritual vacuum. This is exacerbated by uncertainties over Taiwan's political future: whether it remains an independent state, or it is re-connected in some way with China. This is the urgent context in which a 'dialogue of the spirit' is called for, as Christians and Buddhists witness to the deepest values of life in a society that needs to retrieve a spiritual and moral basis.

### **Areas for Further Research and Development**

The last point leads us beyond what it has been possible to include in the research that underlies this thesis. There is as yet very little evidence of spiritual dialogue between Christians and Buddhists in Taiwan. Within the framework of the dialogue of social action, and reflective 'dialogue of the word,' it is to be hoped that such 'dialogue of the spirit' might grow.

In the first instance, however, the outcomes of the present research project need to be tested in practice. The model on which the present research has been conducted is to start with empirical analysis as a basis for theorisation. While it can reasonably be claimed that the theoretical view of Christian-Buddhist dialogue that has been advanced in the thesis is founded on empirical considerations, the next step must be to bring the theories back to critical examination and assessment in the context of the lives of the two communities of faith. As theory derives from practice, it is essential that it is tested in practice.

If the theory of dialogue offered in this thesis seems to hold promise for Christian-Buddhist dialogue, this begs the question of whether it holds equally true for Christian engagement with other religious communities in Taiwan. This is a dimension of research that it has not been possible to include in the present project, but the need for which is raised by what the thesis has tried to establish.

Finally, it would be interesting to compare this approach to Christian-Buddhist dialogue that has been advanced in this thesis with situations of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in other parts of Asia. If the emphasis in this thesis has been laid upon dialogue as a process of contextualization, reconciliation, and transformation, it might be asked how this compares with the link that has been made between dialogue and liberation in, for example, South Asia.

In short, this thesis does not assume that the approach to dialogue that it has propounded is in any sense universal. On the contrary, it has tried to be specific to the context, legacies, and challenges of Taiwan. It has not been assumed that it is legitimate to generalize from this, or any other specific context. It would be valuable, however, to compare emerging approaches to Christian-Buddhist dialogue in different parts of Asia in the research for 'inter-contextual' understandings of current trends and future possibilities.

### **A Personal Voyage of the Dialogue**

The introduction of the thesis included a word about the researcher's personal motivation in undertaking this research in terms of his desire to start a voyage of dialogue with other religions. This thesis can therefore be read as the researcher's personal dialogue with the three religious traditions of his native land, and his reflection as a Christian minister on the significance of inter-religious dialogue. This journey has been disciplined by field research, in which the researcher has dialogued with Taiwanese Buddhists as well as Christians. Not every experience of these dialogues was comfortable especially when some people rejected the request to be interviewed, or used the interview as an opportunity to try to proselytise the researcher. Not every meeting was peaceful, especially when the issues of doctrinal disagreement were raised. However, many of dialogues were pleasant experiences in which ideas were discussed with sincerity and enthusiasm, friendships were built, and the common emphasis for human wellbeing was exchanged. Through these dialogues, the researcher learned a great deal more about Buddhism in Taiwan and much about his own Christian faith as well, in ways that have enriched rather than diminished his personal belief. As a result, the researcher has grown in the conviction that people of faith should broaden their sights and seek to dialogue with each other. Through the dialogue, people will build up mutual relations, enrich each other, and commonly make contributions to the human welfare.

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## Glossary of Selected Chinese Words

The following list includes technical terms that have been used in the thesis more than once. Each entry begins with the term as it appears in English transliteration in the text of the thesis. This is followed by the term in its Chinese form. Where appropriate an English translation is given, and in all cases there is a brief definition or interpretation of the meaning of the term. Chinese transliterations follow the United Nations Phonetic Symbols, and the Chinese original is also given. The author has allowed himself some discretion in English translations of Chinese terms, either adopting existing translations, or providing his own.

**21<sup>st</sup> Century's New Taiwan Mission Movement.** 21 世紀新台灣宣教運動: A mission movement of PCT since 1999 CE.

**Amitābha.** 阿彌陀佛: A Buddha, who is considered in Pure Land belief to have the miraculous power to save his followers for rebirth in Pure Land.

**Amitāyurdhyāna.** 觀無量壽經: the Contemplating Amitayur Sutra: one of three main sutras of Pure Land belief.

**Analects.** 論語: A text about the life and teachings of Confucius compiled by his disciples shortly after his death.

**The Asian Orphan.** 亞細亞的孤兒: A name used to describe the history and suffering of Taiwan given by Taiwanese writer Wu Zhuoliu (吳濁流) in his book, *'the Asian Orphan.'*

**Biblical Basis and Theological Standpoint to the Gospel Movement for the Year 2000.** 兩千年福音運動的聖經根基和神學立場: A Theological Statement given by the General Assembly of PCT in response to the Year 2000 Movement.

**The Book of Rites.** 禮記: One of Confucian texts containing the instruction for the performance of various rites of social life.

**Buddha Light Mountain.** 佛光山: One of four contemporary Taiwanese Buddhist 'complexes' founded by Master Shinyun.

**Caodong Sects.** 曹洞宗: One of the sects in Chan Buddhism, popular in southeastern China and Japan, and the originator of Taiwanese Chan Buddhism.

**Chan Heavenly Master.** (張天師): The founder of the Zheng Yi Sect, Daoism.

**Charity Hall.** 善堂: A Taiwanese religious sect mixing elements of Confucianism and folk beliefs popular in the Japanese occupation period.

**Chen Shuibian.** 陳水扁: Current President of Taiwan, who was also the first non-KMT president.

**Chengyen.** 証嚴: The founder of Tzuchi Merit Society.

**Chhut Thau Thi.** 出頭天: one of themes of PCT contextual theology, literally meaning to 'raise one's head to see the sky.'

**Chiang Kaishek.** 蔣介石: The leader of the KMT government from 1917 to 1975.

**China Lutheran Seminary.** 中華信義神學院: The Lutheran Seminary in Taiwan.

**China Religious People Association.** 中國宗教徒協會: An inter-religious organisation established in Nanjing, China during World War II, and resumed in Taipei in 1951 CE.

**Chinese Buddhist Association.** 中國佛教會: The national Buddhist association in Taiwan in the KMT period.

**Chou Dynasty.** 周朝: An ancient Chinese Dynasty from 1122 to 249 BCE.

**Chunghwa Institute of Buddhist Study.** 中華佛學研究所: A Buddhist academic institute founded by Master Shengyen.

**The Commission for Inter-religious Dialogue and Ecumenical Cooperation.** 天主教宗教交談與合作委: CCT official organisation for the inter-religious dialogue founded in 1991 CE.

**The Conference of Religions and Peace in Taiwan.** 中華民國宗教與和平協進會:



An organisation for inter-religious dialogue founded in 1994 CE.

**Confucianism.** 儒家: The Chinese belief and value system founded by Confucius that became the mainline value system in China for 2,000 years.

**Confucius.** 孔子: The Chinese thinker who found the Confucianism

**Dahang Park.** 大安公園: A city park in Taipei. Kuanyin statue in this park became the cause of the conflict between Buddhism and Christianity in 1992 CE.

**Dao.** 道: The name of the Ultimate Reality in Daoism and Confucianism though each interprets the concept differently.

**A Declaration on Human Rights.** 人權宣言: The third political statement proposed by PCT in 1977 CE.

**Democratic Progressive Party.** 民進黨/DPP: The opposition party in the Nationalist period in Taiwan that became the ruling party when Chen Shuibian was elected in 2000 CE.

**Dharma and Vinaya Delivery.** 傳法傳戒: A Buddhist rite: when one becomes a monk or nun, he/she has to accept the delivery of Dharma and Vinaya from the master.

**The Dharma delivering apart from textual teachings.** 教外別傳: An important concept of Chan Buddhism indicating that there is an alternative way of delivering Dharma, which is through meditation rather than textual teachings.

**Dharma Drum Mountain.** 法鼓山: One of four contemporary Taiwanese Buddhist 'complexes' founded by Master Shengyen.

**Doubling the Church Movement.** 倍加運動: A Mission of PCT during 1955-1965 to celebrate the centenary of the Church.

**Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.** 台灣基督教長老會信仰告白: A PCT Confession of Faith in 1986 CE signifying a new stage of PCT's contextualisation.

**Fujen Catholic University.** 輔仁大學: One of the Catholic university in Taiwan

**Fukien.** 福建: A province of China in southeastern China, where the South Fukien people are from.

**Gwangdong.** 廣東: A province of China in southern China, where the Hakka people are from.

**Hakka.** 客家人: One clan of Chinese Han People, the second biggest ethnic group in Taiwan.

**Han Dynasty.** 漢朝: An ancient Chinese dynasty from 206 BCE to 220CE

**Han People.** 漢族 (人): The predominant ethnic group in China and Taiwan

**Homeland.** 鄉土: one of the names that PCT call Taiwan to express the Church 's identification with the place it belongs to. It becomes one of the issues of PCT's contextual theology.

**Homeland Theology.** 鄉土神學: A theological issue proposed by Taiwanese theologian Wang Hsienchi. This theology expresses PCT's identification with Taiwan

**Humanistic Buddhism.** 人間佛教: The reform Buddhist movement originated from Master Taixu, established its theoretical foundation by Master Yinshun, and acquired its success in Taiwan.

**In the Name of 'the Republic of Taiwan', Walk Taiwan's Own Path.** 以台灣國名, 行台灣路: A PCT's political statement proposed in 2002 CE initiating the independence of Taiwan.

**King Ping.** 周平王: The first king of East Chou, he moved the capital to the east in 722 BCE and marked the start of the East Chou.

**Koxinga.** 鄭成功: The officer of Ming Dynasty. When Ming dynasty was replaced by Qing, he retreated to Taiwan and drove out the Dutch.

**Kuanyin.** 觀音菩薩: One of the most popular Bodhisattvas in Chinese Buddhism, viewed as the symbol of compassion

**Laotze.** 太上老君 (老子): A Chinese thinker in East Chou, the founder of Daoist philosophy.

**The larger *Sukhāvatīyūha*.** 大阿彌陀經/the longer Land of Bliss Sutra: One of three main sutras of Pure Land belief.

**Li.** 禮/ Rite: A Confucian concept means the rules of proper behaviour.

**Li Denhui.** 李登輝: The former president of Taiwan from 1988 to 2000 CE.

**Linji Sects.** 臨濟宗: One of the sects in Chan Buddhism, is popular in southeastern China and Japan, and the originator of Taiwanese Chan Buddhism.

**Literary Club.** 文社: One of the social clubs in the Japanese occupation, which is considered as the institute of advocating Confucianism.

**Luan Hall.** 鸞堂: A religious sect intermixing the Confucianism and folk beliefs. Luan means the presents of deities. In Luan Hall, the rites that the deities possess the spiritual medium so as to give the oral devices to people will be held

**Mainlander.** 外省人: the people, who comes to Taiwan from China with the retreat of the KMT government in 1949.

**Maitreya Vyakarana Sutra.** 彌勒下生經: A Buddhist sutra prophesising the Maitreya Bodhisattva who will descend to earth and establish a Pure Land in this world.

**Mencius.** 孟子: A Confucian thinker from 321-289 BCE, who is considered to be the most important follower of Confucius

**Ming Dynasty.** 明朝: A Chinese dynasty from 1368 to 1644 CE

**Mission of the Kingdom of God.** 上帝國宣教: A PCT mission held in 1994 CE claiming the actualisation of the Kingdom of God in this world is the mission of the

Church.

**Mission to Community.** 社區宣教: A PCT mission held in 1999 CE emphasizing the importance of the Church's service in the community.

**Modern Chan Society.** 現代禪: A modern Taiwanese Buddhist group founded by Li Yuansong in 1989 CE.

**Mountain People.** 高山族 or 原住民: Taiwanese aborigine.

**The Movement of Restoring Chinese Culture.** 復興中華文化運動: A cultural reformation movement advocated by the KMT government so as to claim the legitimacy of its regime.

**Nanying Buddhist Association.** 南瀛佛教會: A national Buddhist organisation in Taiwan during the Japanese occupation.

**Nationalist Party or Government (KMT).** 國民黨（政府）: The political party founded by Sun Yatsen, that declared the Republic of China in 1911 CE. Defeated by Communists in the civil war, it retreated to Taiwan and continued its regime. After the democratisation in Taiwan, KMT lost power and currently functions as the opposition party.

**New Taiwanese.** 新台灣人: A concept advocated by some sociologists in Taiwan claiming that while searching for the self-identification of Taiwan, it is important to redefine the meaning of 'Taiwanese' that covers all the inhabitants and to bring the reconciliation between different ethnic groups.

**Nien.** 念 or 唸: reciting or concentrating

**Nien-fo.** 唸佛: Calling the name of Buddha, the practices that acquire the salvation of Amitābha.

**Our Appeal.** 我們的呼籲: The second political statement of PCT proposed in 1975 CE.

**The Period of the Degenerate Dharma.** 末法時期: According to Buddhist view of

history, this refers to the third Dharma period, 1,500 years after the death of Śākyamuni Buddha. This period is also the period of last day in which the society is so corrupted that human beings find it too difficult to accept the Dharma. Therefore, Pure Land belief considers it is necessary to provide an easy path to help people to practice Dharma.

**Poem Club.** 詩社: One of the social clubs in the Japanese occupation, which is considered as the institute of advocating Confucianism.

**Pratītya-samutpāda.** 緣起 /dependent origin: Buddhist view of conditioned experience

**Puli.** 埔里: A small town in the middle of Taiwan, the location of 921-earthquake.

**Qing Dynasty.** 清朝: The last dynasty of China from 1644 to 1911 CE

**Reading the Bible with New Eyes Movement.** 新眼光讀經運動: PCT's movement of scripture reading, which is one of the projects of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century New Taiwan Mission Movement.

**the rebellion of Shi Lai Temple.** 西來庵事件: A rebellion of Taiwanese people to Japanese occupation, which was led by religious people

**The Reformation of Human Heart.** 心靈改革: A social movement advocated by former Taiwanese president Li Denhui claiming the importance of the reformation of human heart in contemporary Taiwanese society.

**Ren.** 人: human beings

**Ren.** 仁: The basic essence of human virtues in Confucianism usually translated as benevolence or goodness.

**Ro Guang.** 羅光: the late Archbishop of CCT and principal of Fugen Catholic University.

**Śākyamuni.** 釋迦牟尼佛: the Buddha

**Shan Guoxi.** 單國璽: The Cardinal and Archbishop of CCT

**The Smaller *Sukhāvativyūha*.** 阿彌陀經/the shorter Land of Bliss Sutra: One of three main sutras of Pure Land belief.

**Southern Fukien.** 閩南人: The south part of Fukien Province, China, where the Southern Fukien people are from.

**Statement on Our National Fate.** 對國是的聲明與建議: The first political statement of PCT proposed in 1971 CE.

**The *Sukhāvativyūha* Abhidharma.** 往生論/the discourse of the Land of Bliss: A Buddhist discourse, one of the texts of Pure Land belief.

**Sung Dynasty.** 宋朝: A Chinese dynasty from 960-1279 CE

**The syncretism of Chan and Pure Land beliefs.** 禪淨融合: The tendency of Chinese Buddhism after the Sung Dynasty, means two main Chinese Buddhist Schools, Chan and Pure Land, integrate the other's practices into their own.

**A syncretistic combination of five religions.** 五教合一: The basic elements of Unity Sect in Taiwan claiming that this belief is the syncretism of five religions, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Daosim, and Islam.

**Taixu.** 太虛: The Chinese reforming Buddhist monk in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, who sowed the seeds of contemporary Taiwanese Buddhist reformation.

**Tang Dynasty.** 唐朝: A Chinese dynasty from 618 to 907 CE.

**The Theology of 'Chhut Thau Thi'.** 出頭天(自決)神學: One of the theses of PCT contextual theology proposed by Huang Poho claiming the mission of PCT is to seek the 'Chhut Thau Tih' or self-determination of Taiwanese people.

**The Theology of Identification.** 認同神學: One of the theses of PCT contextual theology proposed by Chen Nanzhou claiming the essence of PCT contextual theology is to identify the Church with Taiwanese history and people.



**Theory of 'the goodness in human nature'.** 性善說: A Confucian concept proposed by Mencius claiming that human beings receive from Heaven the gift of innate endowment of human nature, especially the faculty of moral discernment.

**Three Ages.** 三代: A period of Chinese history composed of three ancient dynasties, Hsia, Shang, and West Chou, which is often considered as the golden age of China.

**Three States.** 三國: A disunity period of China when three states, Wei, Wu, and later Han coexisted from 220 to 280 CE.

**Tien.** 天: Heaven; A general name of the 'Ultimate Reality' in the concept of Chinese though different religions and philosophy give 'it' different meanings. In Confucianism, Tien means an impersonal Reality, which show human inner virtues and external ethical principle.

**Tzuchu Merit Society.** 慈濟功德會: One of four contemporary Taiwanese Buddhist 'complexes' founded by Master Chengyen.

**Unity Sect.** 一貫道: One of the Chinese/Taiwanese folk beliefs claiming the syncretism of five religions.

**Vegetarian Sect.** 齋教: one of Buddhist sects in Taiwan but is disowned by orthodox Buddhism because it does not have monastic system.

**The World of Unity and Equality.** 大同世界: An ideal world in Chinese culture especially proposed by Confucianism. The contents of this ideal world were recorded in the Book of Rites.

**Xiao.** 孝: Filial piety, One of the important virtues in Chinese culture.

**Yongchian Temple in Gu Mountain.** 鼓山湧泉寺: A Buddhist Chan temple in Fukien, the origin of Taiwanese Buddhism before Japanese occupation.

**Yu Bin.** 于斌: The late cardinal of CCT, is considered as the one who founded China Religious People Association.

**Zheng Lijing.** 鄭麗津: A Christian, who was originally a Buddhist nun, but converted

to Christianity later and became the researcher of China Lutheran Seminary.

**Zheng Zaifa.** 鄭再發: A bishop of CCT and current chairperson of the Commission for Inter-religious Dialogue and Ecumenical Cooperation

**Zheng Yi Sect.** 正乙教: One of the sect in Daoist religion and popular in Southeast of China.

**Zhingshing.** 淨心: current president of Chinese Buddhist Association and the Conference of Religions and Peace in Taiwan.

**Zhuyun.** 煮雲法師: A Buddhist monk who aroused the debates between Taiwanese Buddhism and Christianity in the 1950s.

## Appendix I.

### Statement on Our National Fate by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (台灣長老會對國是的聲明與建議)

#### Chinese Text (中文版本)

##### 對國是的聲明與建議

台灣基督長老教會總會常置委員會，鑒於可能嚴重地威脅台灣地區全民生存的當前國際局勢表示深切的關懷。秉著耶穌基督是全地的主宰，公義的審判者，也是全人類的救主之信仰，我們代表二十萬基督徒也願意代表我們同胞的心聲作如下的聲明與建議：

##### 一. 向國際的聲明

現居台灣的人民，其祖先有的自幾千年前已定居於此，大部份於兩三百前移入，有些是第二次世界大戰後遷來的。雖然我們的背景與見解有所差異，可是我們均擁有堅決的共同信念與熱望-----我們愛這島嶼，以此為家鄉；我們希望在和平，自由及公義之中生活；我們絕不願在共產極權下度日。

我們對尼克森總統即將訪問中國大陸的事甚為警惕。有些國家主張台灣歸併中共政權，也有國家主張讓台北與北平直接談判。我們認為這些主張的本意無異於出賣台灣地區的人民。

我們反對任何國家罔顧台灣地區一千五百萬人的人權與意志，只顧私利而作出任何違反人權的決定。人權既是上帝所賜予，人民自有權利決定他們自己的命運。

##### 二. 向國內的建議

最近我中華民國在聯合國成為國際間政治交易的犧牲品是有目共睹的，依此情勢繼續發展，我們恐難免於像東歐諸國被共產極權壓迫的悲慘遭遇。為此我們呼籲政府與人民更加把握機會，伸張正義與自由，並徹底革新內政以維護我國在國際間的聲譽與地位。

最近政府一再強調起用新人，所以我們切望政府於全國統一之前能在自由地區（台，澎，金，馬）作中央民意代表的全面改選，以接替二十餘年前在大陸所產生的現任代表。如德國目前雖未完成全國統一，但因西德臨時制憲使自由地區人民得以選出代表組成國會，卻因這種革新政體而贏得國際上的敬重。

我們相信這種革新與改進必能使國際人士及本國人民感於確有公義的保證和內在的和諧。<sup>1</sup>

台灣基督長老教會

總會議 長 劉華義  
總會總幹事 高俊明

主後 1971 年 12 月 29 日

### English Version

The Executive Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, which speaks for 200,000 Christians in Taiwan, wishes to express its extreme concern over developments in the world which could seriously affect the lives of all who live on this island. Based on our belief that Jesus Christ is Lord of all men, the righteous Judge and Saviour of the world, we voice our concern and our request, and in doing so we are convinced that we speak not only for the church but for all our compatriots.

### To All Nations Concerned

We the people on Taiwan love this island which, either by birth or chance, is our home. Some of us have roots here going back a thousand years; the majority count a residence of two or three centuries while some have come since the Second World War. We are all well aware of our different backgrounds and even conflicts, but at present we are more aware of a common certainty and shared conviction. We long to live here in peace, freedom and justice. And we do not wish to be governed by Peiping.

We note with concern that President Nixon will soon visit the Chinese Mainland. Some member countries of the United Nations are advocating the transfer of Taiwan to mainland rule, while others insist on direct negotiations between Taipei and Peiping which means substantially the same betrayal of the people on Taiwan.

We oppose any powerful nation disregarding the rights and wishes of fifteen million people and making unilateral decisions to their own advantage, because God

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<sup>1</sup> The Chinese text is from The Editing Group of 'Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,' *Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, revised, Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2000, 125-126.

ordained, and the United Nations Charter has affirmed, that every people has the right to determine its own destiny.

To the Leaders of the Republic of China

Our nation has recently become the victim of international political bargaining in world affairs. If this trend is not soon reversed, some day in the near future the people on Taiwan may share the tragic fate of people in countries of eastern Europe which have been oppressed by communism. In order to maintain our position and reputation in the international community, we therefore, request our government and people better to grasp the opportunities available to raise our demand for justice and freedom, and for thorough internal renewal.

Recently the government has stressed the use of new people in official positions. Therefore we earnestly request that, within the Taiwan area, it hold elections of all representatives to the highest government bodies to succeed the present representatives who were elected 25 years ago on the mainland. The Federal Republic of Germany is not yet unified with East Germany, but its people have been able to elect a new representative government under a temporary constitution. This is an example which our government might consider. Such a political system has enabled the Federal Republic of Germany to find an honourable place among the world nations, even though so far it is not a member of the United Nations.

We believe that such demonstration of renewal and progress will give the people of other nations, as well as our own, the assurance that justice and internal harmony reigns within.<sup>2</sup>

Signed by

H. Y. Liu

Moderator of the General Assembly

C. M. Kao

General Secretary

29 December 1971

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<sup>2</sup> The revised English translation was sponsored by the Committee on World Church Relations of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, September 15-18, 1975. Its text is available from [http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements\\_1.htm](http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements_1.htm).

## Appendix II.

### Our Appeal by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (我們的呼籲)

#### Chinese Text (中文版本)

#### 我們的呼籲

自從 1971 年台灣基督長老教會發表國是聲明後，曾引起國內外人士之重視與熱烈的反應，國是聲明之發表乃基於我教會對家命運之關心，儘管有部份人士對國是聲明加以誤解和抨擊，然而我教會仍憑信仰良心以告白教會之堅定信仰。幾年來，我教會一直堅持國是聲明的原則與信念，一再主張任何世界強權不得宰制我們國家之命運。唯有我們自己的人民才有權利決定自己之命運。我教會也迄未曾改變初衷，深信唯有徹底實施憲法，革新政治，才能建立符合民主精神的政府。我教會從不鬆懈為達此目標而努力。

時局變化莫測，我國家正陷於外交孤立，面臨世界經濟危機之際，教會不該苟且偷安，放棄先知職責。我們知道若只有歌功頌德，實不足以表達教會的愛國心，也無法協助政府解除當前之困難。惟有以愛心說誠實話，積極關心我國政治前途，才能協助開放，民主，公正，廉能之政府。

鑑於國家正處危急存亡之秋，教會更應擔負起國家存亡之責任，坦誠地向政府表明我教會的立場，提出對國是之意見，同時呼籲教會摒棄本位主義的心理及只重視個人得救的觀念。為了挽救國家的危機，應精誠團結，成全教會為維護公義，自由，和平的任務，使教會堪稱時代的基督忠僕。

因此，我們呼籲政府重視下列幾項與國家命運息息相關的問題，並促請接納我們之建議：

#### 一、維護憲法所賦予人民宗教信仰之自由

在自由世界各國的人民都享有充分的信仰自由。尤其每一個人應享有自由使用自己的言語去敬拜上帝，以表達個人的宗教信仰。

不幸，聖經公會所印行之地方語言之聖經竟遭查扣取締，此事發生後震驚海內外。有關當局以方言聖經構成違反推行國語政策為由加以取締。然而，一國之政策絕不能抵觸憲法之基本精神。如今，雖經數度交涉已發還舊版白話字聖經，然而我們陳情政府為維護憲法上之信仰自由，發還新譯白話字聖經，並准予繼續出版任何語言之聖經。

#### 二、突破外交孤立困境

自從我國政府退出聯合國之後，我國外交突陷孤立困境。現在政府正鼓勵民間各界積極推展國民外交，以促進文化，經濟的交流。故我們政府應該准許教會自由參



加普世教協等國際性教會組織，我們不能因世界教會組織中少數不同之意見，而放棄參與國際性教會組織的機會。

### 三、建立政府與教會間之互信互賴

不可否認地，教會是協助國家進步安定的一股大力量，政府與教會之間應保有互信，互賴之精神，互信與互賴之關係乃建立在彼此尊重之基礎上。

我們建議政府應與教會當局取得直接關係，彼此坦誠就國家前途與社會改革交換意見，才能促進教會與政府間之互信與互賴。

### 四、促進居住在台灣人民的和諧與團結

此時此地，不應有省籍黨籍之分別。分黨結派，破壞團結，導致不幸與分裂。面臨當前困難局勢，只有同舟共濟，才能挽回危機。爲了消除省籍黨籍之差異，不應存有彼此之優越感，國民應享有權利與義務平等之機會。我們畢竟是同住在這塊土地上生活的同胞，所以應以互諒互助及互相接納的態度對待。

### 五、保障人民的安全與福利

台灣經濟快速成長發展，固然帶來了社會的繁榮，也帶來了人性的墮落，道德頹廢，公害猖獗，貧富懸殊，治安問題益形嚴重。教會基於保護人權與維護人性尊嚴之使命，呼籲政府加強社會發展，針對社會風氣之敗壞，貧窮，貪污，治安及公害諸問題，採取有效措施，以保障人民之安全與福利。

爲了負起教會的時代使命，我們也呼籲教會注視當前所面臨之問，我們祈求聖靈幫助我們，引領我們，使教會真實發揮先知和祭司的角色。

#### 一、發揚誠實與公義之精神

教會身處困境，常常失去了誠實的良心，極力避免得罪別人，怕惹麻煩，因此對社會公義的問題缺乏敏感，只是企圖顧全自己利益。教會最感痛苦的一件事是昧著良心說謊話；教會如果缺乏誠實與公義將導致癱瘓。基督的精神無時無刻成爲我教會反省之原則。

#### 二、促進教會内部的團結與堅守教會立場

近幾年來教會不斷分裂威脅到教會整體的生存，分裂主義的思想深深地滲透教會，嚴重危害教會團結。教會針對內部紊亂的實際問題，必須重視秩序的遵守及法規的維護，我們主張任何破壞教會秩序與團結之行爲，必須受到嚴厲制裁。

造成教會混亂的現象乃由於教會失去了正確的信仰立場，我教會的傳道與信徒由於信仰立場不，對自己教會失去認識，常常受到其他團體擺佈，這種任人擺佈的結果往往是由貪小便宜之心理所造成的。教派間之互助合作是理所當然的，但是我們必須先認清自己的原則，顧及教會的秩序與法規，而且教會之合作必須基於互相的

尊重才能達成。

### 三、謀求教會的自立與自主

教會經過一百十年的歷史，雖然在地方教會已達到自立的成果，但是整個總會來說，我們仍然是‘接受教會’。教會的自立不僅限於經濟，尤其在宣教上我教會應從依賴差會的時期進入到自立互助的時期，藉著互助的關係，我教會始能體驗分擔世界教會的責任。教會必須把握其應有之自主性，站在超然的立場，宏揚上帝的公義並維護自由與平等。

### 四、建立與全世界教會密切的關係

教會之所以分裂，乃是由於缺乏普世教會之信念，按我教會信仰告白我們相信教會是聖而公的教會，全世界教會應該尊重異己，彼此接納，達成合一的理想。

近年來有某些教會人士從事破壞我教會與世界教會之關係，我們呼籲教會嚴密注意這種破壞教會合一的行為，同時對於這種破壞行動加以阻止與譴責。

今後我教會為達成與世界教會之關係，更應計畫促進與世界教會在各方面交流之工作，增進教會彼此間之了解與互助。

### 五、關心社會的公義問題與世界問題

教會必須成為公義，真理的僕人，教會存在的目的也是為達成傳達上帝愛的信息，因此教會必須憑著赤誠的愛心進入到社會現實生活，藉服務改變社會的現況。

今天的世界充滿著不義及戰爭的恐怖。由於人類的自私造成世界人類莫大的痛苦，世界飢餓問題，人口問題及人權問題仍急待關心與解決。我教會與全體教會站在同一線上伸手相助，使上帝的愛真正普及於世。

在此時代，教法保持緘默，坐視世界之沉淪。教會除了參與傳揚福音使人悔改信主之外，必須表達對整個國家社會及全世界人類的關懷，才不辜負上帝所交託之使命。<sup>1</sup>

台灣基督長老教會

總會議長 王南傑

總會總幹事 高俊明

主後 1975 年 11 月 18 日

<sup>1</sup> Our Appeal was adopted unanimously by the Executive Committee of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan on 18 November 1975 expressing the position of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. The Chinese text is from The Editing Group of ‘Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,’ *Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, revised, Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2000, 126-132

## English Version

When the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan issued its 'Statement on Our National Fate' at the end of 1971, it attracted considerable attention and aroused a warm response both at home and overseas. The issuing of the "Statement on Our National Fate" was based on our church's faith in the Lordship of Jesus Christ over the world, and was concerned for human rights for all people in Taiwan, and indeed for the destiny of our nation. Although some, both within the church and outside it, misunderstood or opposed the Statement, our church, as its conscience dictates, has continued to stand by this firm expression of its faith. In the few years since then our church, in accordance with the principles and faith of the Statement, has repeatedly advocated that no external world power should interfere with our nation's destiny. Only our own people have the right to determine our own destiny. Our church has not moved from this original purpose, and firmly believes that only if all the rights which are guaranteed under the constitution are actually observed-which would mean a political reformation - can we have a really democratic government. Our church has not been negligent in its efforts to achieve this goal.

Conditions change very rapidly; our nation has become isolated in its relations with other countries, and we face an impending world economic crisis. In these circumstances the church must not carelessly take its ease and abandon the role of prophet. We know that if we only praise what is commendable, this is not adequate expression of the church's responsibility to the nation and is no way to help the government overcome present difficulties. Only by speaking the truth in love can we show positive concern for our nation's future; only thus can we help in the developing of a democratic, just and honest government.

In view of the danger in which our country stands at this time, the church must take responsibility with regard to the nation's survival, and once again honestly express to the government our church's position on the national fate. We must, at the same time, appeal to the church itself to get rid of a psychology which is concerned only with the individual. In order to save the nation in this time of crisis we in the church must be really united so that we can fulfill our responsibility to promote justice, liberty and peace. Then the church may be worthy to be called a servant of Christ for these times.

Because of this we appeal to the government to view with concern several problems closely related to our national destiny, and we earnestly request the government to accept these proposals:

1. To preserve the freedom of religious faith which is guaranteed to the people in the constitution.

The people in every nation in the free world enjoy full religious liberty. Thus every person should be able to enjoy the freedom to use his own language to worship God and to express his own religious faith. Most regrettably, Bibles published in some of the local languages by the Bible Society have been investigated and confiscated. When this happened it was a great shock to people both here and abroad. The authorities concerned

regard the printing of the Bible in local languages as a contravention of the policy to promote the use of the National language and this is their reason for suppressing it. However, one such decision can never contravene the basic spirit of the constitution. Now, although after several negotiations the old edition of the Bible in Roman characters has been returned, we are continuing to press this matter with the government in the hope that, in order to preserve the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of faith, the new translation of the romanized Bible may also be returned; but most important of all we urge that the freedom to continue to publish and distribute the Bible in any language be guaranteed.

2. To help overcome our isolation in foreign relations.

Since our government withdrew from the United Nations, our nation's foreign relations have suddenly sunk into a state of isolation. Now the government is encouraging people at every level positively to develop foreign relations and to promote cultural and economic contracts. Therefore it ought not to prevent the church participating in the World Council of Churches and other church organizations of an international nature. Because some of the views held in such organizations may not be the same as those of our government, we cannot abandon the opportunity of participating in these international church bodies.

3. To establish a relationship of mutual trust and confidence between the government and the church.

It cannot be denied that the church is a powerful force in helping to promote the nation's progress and security. Between government and church there must be an atmosphere of trust based on respect for each other.

We suggest that the government should establish a direct relationship with the church authorities, and that both sides share their views of the future of the nation and the reforming of society honestly together. This is the only way in which we can achieve this mutual trust and confidence.

4. To help toward the reconciliation and working together of all people living in Taiwan.

At this time and in this place we should not permit differences, arising out of one's place of origin and whether one is a member of a Party or not, to create unfortunate divisions which would ruin our living and working together.

Immediately before us is a very difficult situation, and it is only as we realize that we are all in the same boat that we can weather the crisis. In order to eliminate discrimination based on provincial origin or party membership we should not countenance any feeling that one person is superior to another. Everybody should enjoy the opportunities of equal privilege and responsibility. Basically, we are all brothers and sisters living together in Taiwan and we ought to treat each other in an attitude of understanding, help and acceptance.

5. To preserve human rights and the welfare of the people.

The economy of Taiwan has grown and developed very quickly and it has, of course, brought with it an affluent society, but has also brought a loss of personal worth, moral



decadence, rampant pollution, a wide gap between the rich and the poor, and the increasingly serious problem of public peace and order. The church, on the basis of its mission to protect human rights and preserve human dignity, appeals to the government to strengthen the development of society, to focus its attention on the problems of the atmosphere of corruption in society, of unequal distribution of wealth, of avarice, public peace and order and pollution, and to adopt effective measures to safeguard human rights and the welfare of the people.

In order that the church may take up its mission for today we also appeal to it to give attention to the problems that lie before us all, and we beseech the help of the Holy Spirit to lead us and to enable the church to give expression to its true role of prophet and priest.

1. To give honest expression of its concern for justice.

It is very easy for the church to seek to avoid giving offense and causing trouble, and so fail to be sensitive to the question of social justice. If the church is concerned only for its own interests and ignores its conscience it will become paralyzed. We must constantly be subjecting ourselves to re-examination by the standard of the spirit of Christ.

2. To promote unity within the church and to call the church to a better understanding of its own faith.

Recently a divisive spirit has been eroding the unity of the church and positive action needs to be taken to ensure observance of our regulations and to deal strictly with any behaviour that threatens the order and unity of the church.

Because ministers and church members are confused and uncertain about their faith and the position of their church they have often been easily influenced and misled by other groups. It is right that we should cooperate with other denominations, but it is very important that we first understand our own doctrine and church order. There must be an attitude of mutual respect among the churches before any real cooperation can be achieved.

3. To strive for the independence of the church.

Although we have a history of over one hundred and ten years and local congregations have reached self-support, the General Assembly as a whole has to admit "We are still a receiving church". From now on we must put forth greater effort to become "a giving church". This is not in relation to finance only, but has to do even more with the whole missionary task of the church. We must move from a position of dependence on overseas mission boards to one of independence and mutuality in which we share together with the world church in the responsibility for mission. And on the basis of our own faith we must be prepared to proclaim God's justice and uphold freedom and peace in our own land.

4. To establish a close relationship with the church in the whole world.

A lack of confidence in the world-wide church has been a cause of division within our church, but in our confession of faith we profess to believe in the holy catholic church. The various churches throughout the world ought to respect each other's opinions while

accepting each other and working together towards a greater unity.

We appeal to our own church members to pay attention to, and try to put a stop to, the kind of harmful activity that damages our relationship with the world church. We should seek to enter into an exchange of personnel and work with other branches of the world church so that we can understand and support each other better.

5. To be more concerned for social justice and world problems.

The church should become the servant of justice and truth; the aim of the church's existence is to communicate the message of God's love, and because of this the church must, in the spirit of real love, get involved in the actualities of modern society and through service seek to change the conditions of society.

The world today is full of the fear of injustice and war. Humanity's greatest suffering is the result of its own selfishness in the world. The world's problems of hunger, overpopulation and human rights still urgently call for concern and solution. Our church here and the church in the whole world must stand together to extend a helping hand to each other, so that the love of God may truly be spread throughout the world.

The church cannot, here and now, keep silence, sitting by and watching the world sink into ruin; besides participating in the spreading of the gospel and leading men to repent and believe in the Lord, it must express concern for the whole nation, for society, and for the whole of mankind. Only in this way will it not fail to live up to the mission entrusted to it by God.<sup>2</sup>

'Our Appeal' was adopted unanimously by the Executive Committee of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan on 18 November 1975 expressing the position of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.

Signed by

N. J. Wang  
Moderator of the General Assembly

C. M. Kao  
General Secretary

18 November 1975

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<sup>2</sup> Its English version is quoted from [http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements\\_3.htm](http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements_3.htm).



### Appendix III.

## A Declaration on Human Rights by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (人權宣言)

### Chinese Text

人權宣言—致美國卡特總統, 有關國家及全世界教會

本教會根據告白耶穌基督為全類的主, 且確信人權與鄉土是上帝所賜, 鑑於現今台灣一千七百萬住民面臨的危機, 發表本宣言。

卡特先生就任美國總統以來, 一貫採取‘人權’為外交原則, 實具外交史上劃時代之意義。我們要求卡特總統繼續本著人權道義之精神, 在與中共關係正常化時, 堅持‘保全台灣人民的安全, 獨立與自由’。

面臨中共企圖併吞台灣之際, 基於我們[的信仰及聯合國人權宣言]我們堅定主張: ‘台灣的將來應由台灣一千七百萬住民決定。’我們向有關國家, 特別向美國國民及政府, 並全世界教會緊急呼籲, 採取最有效的步驟, 支持我們的呼聲。

為達成台灣人民獨立及自由的願望, 我們促請政府於此國際情勢危急之際, 面對現實, 採取有效措施, 使台灣成為一個新而獨立的國家。

我們懇求上帝, 使台灣和全世界成為‘慈愛和誠實彼此相遇; 和平安彼此相親, 誠實從地而生; 公義從天而現。’(詩篇八十五: 10-11) 的地方。<sup>1</sup>

台灣基督長老教會

總會議長 趙信恩 (出國中)

總會副議長 翁修恭 (代行)

總會總幹事 高俊明

主後 1977 年 8 月 16 日

<sup>1</sup> ‘A Declaration of Human right’ was adopted unanimously by the Executive Committee of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan on 16 August 1977 expressing the position of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. The Chinese text is from The Editing Group of ‘Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,’ *Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, revised, Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2000, 133.

**English version**

To the President of the United States, to all countries concerned, and to the Christian churches throughout the world:

Our church confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord of all mankind and believes that human rights and a land in which each one of us has a stake are gifts bestowed by God. Therefore, we make the declaration, set in the context of the present crisis threatening the 17 million people of Taiwan.

Ever since President Carter's inauguration as President of the United States he has consistently adopted 'Human Rights' as a principle of his diplomacy. This is an epoch-making event in the history of foreign policy.

We therefore request President Carter to continue to uphold the principles of human rights while pursuing the 'normalization of relationships with Communist China' and to insist on guaranteeing the security, independence and freedom of the people of Taiwan.

As we face the possibility of an invasion by Communist China, we hold firmly to our faith and to the principles underlying the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. We insist that the future of Taiwan shall be determined by the 17 million people who live there. We appeal to the countries concerned - especially to the people and the government of the United States of America - and to Christian churches throughout the world to take effective steps to support our cause.

In order to achieve our goal of independence and freedom for the people of Taiwan in this critical international situation, we urge our government to face reality and to take effective measures whereby Taiwan may become a new and independent country.

We beseech God that Taiwan and all the rest of the world may become a place where 'Mercy and truth will meet together; righteousness and peace will embrace. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.' (Psalm 85:10, 11) [KJV]<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Its English version is available from [http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements\\_4.htm](http://www.pct.org.tw/english/statements_4.htm).

Signed by:

H. E. Chao

Moderator of the General Assembly

H. K. Weng

Deputy Moderator of the General Assembly

(Acting in the absence of the Moderator)

C. M. Kao

General Secretary

16 August 1977

## Appendix IV.

### Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (台灣基督長老教會信仰告白)

#### Romanised Taiwanese Text (台語漢字)

阮信上帝, 創造, 統治人與萬物的獨一真神, 他是歷史與世界的主, 施行審判和拯救. 祂的子對聖神投胎, 對在聖女馬利亞出世作人, 作咱的兄弟, 就是人類的救主耶穌基督. 對他的苦, 釘十字架, 死, 復活, 顯明上帝的仁愛與公義, 使咱與上帝復和. 他的神, 就是聖神, 站在咱中間, 賞賜氣力, 使咱在萬百姓中作見證, 直到主再來.

阮信, 聖經是上帝所啓示的, 記載他的救贖, 作阮信仰與生活的準則.

阮信, 教會是上帝百姓的團契, 受召來宣揚耶穌基督的拯救, 作和解的使者, 是普世的, 復釘根在本地, 認同所有的住民, 通過愛與受苦, 來作成盼望的記號.

阮信, 人對上帝的恩典來悔改, 罪得赦免, 用虔誠, 仁愛與獻身的生活歸榮光上帝.

阮信, 上帝使人有尊嚴, 才能, 以及鄉土, 來有份於他的創造, 負責任和他相與管世界. 對如此, 人有社會, 政治及經濟的制度, 也有文藝, 科學, 復有追求真神的心. 總是人有罪, 誤用這些恩賜, 破壞人, 萬物與上帝的關係. 所以, 人著倚靠耶穌基督的救恩. 他要使人對罪惡中得著釋放, 使受壓制的得自由, 平等, 在基督作成新創造的人, 界成作他的國, 充滿公義, 平安與歡喜

阿們

#### Chinese Version (中文譯本)

我們信上帝, 創造, 統治人與萬物的獨一真神. 他是歷史與世界的主, 施行審判和拯救. 他的兒子, 從聖靈投胎, 由童真女馬利亞降生爲人, 成爲我們的弟兄, 就是人類的救主耶穌基督, 藉著他的受苦, 釘十字架, 死復活, 彰顯了上帝的仁愛與公義, 使我們與上帝復和. 他的靈, 就是聖靈, 住在我們中間, 賜能力, 使我們在萬民中作見證, 直到主再來.

我們信，聖經是上帝所啓示的，記載他的救贖，作為我們信仰與生的準則。

我們信，教會是上帝子民的團契，蒙召來宣揚耶穌基督的拯救，作和解的使者，是普世的，且根植於本地，認同所有的住民，通過愛與受苦，而成為盼望的記號。

我們信，人藉著上帝的恩典而悔改，罪得免，以虔誠，仁愛與獻身的生活榮耀於上帝。

我們信，上帝賜人有尊嚴，才能，以及鄉土，使人有份於他的創造，負責任與他一起管理世界。因此人有社會，政治及經濟的制度，也有文藝，科學，且有追求真神的心。但是人有罪，誤用這些恩賜，破壞人，萬物與上帝的關係。所以，人當依靠耶穌基督的救恩。他要使人從罪惡中得釋放，使受壓制的人得自由，平等，在基督裡成為新創造的人，使世界成為他的國度，充滿公義，平安與喜樂。

阿們<sup>1</sup>

### English Version

We believe in God, the only true God, the Creator and Ruler of human beings and all things. He is the Lord of history and of the world. He judges and saves. His Son Jesus Christ, the Saviour of humankind, was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born a man of the Virgin Mary and became our brother. Through His suffering, crucifixion, death and resurrection He manifested God's love and justice, and through Him we are reconciled to God. His Spirit, which is the Holy Spirit, dwells among us, and grants us power, so that we may bear witness among all peoples until the Lord comes again.

We believe that the Bible is revealed by God, the record of His redemption and the norm of our faith and life.

We believe that the Church is the fellowship of God's people, called to proclaim the salvation of Jesus Christ and to be ambassador of reconciliation. It is both universal

<sup>1</sup> The original Romanised Taiwanese text was authorised by 32<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly, the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. Both Romanised Taiwanese text and Chinese version are from: The Editing Group of 'Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.' *Knowing the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*, revised, Taipei, Taiwan: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 2000, 134-135.

and rooted in this land, identifying with all its inhabitants, and through love and suffering becoming the sign of hope. We believe that through the grace of God, human beings are brought to repentance, their sin forgiven, that they may glorify God through lives of devotion, love and dedication.

We believe that God has given human beings dignity, talents and a homeland, so that they may share in God's creation, and have responsibility with Him for taking care of the world. Therefore, they have social, political and economic systems, arts and sciences, and a spirit which seeks after the true God. But human beings have sinned, and they misuse these gifts, destroying the relationship between themselves, all creatures, and God.

Therefore, they must depend on the saving grace of Jesus Christ. He will deliver humankind from sin, will set the oppressed free and make them equal, that all may become new creatures in Christ, and the world His Kingdom, full of justice, peace and joy.<sup>2</sup>

This translation, based on the original Romanized Taiwanese text authorized by the 32nd General Assembly, was officially adopted by the General Assembly Faith and Order Committee on 10 January 1986.

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<sup>2</sup> The translation was adopted by the General Assembly Faith and Order Committee on 10 January 1986. It is available from <http://www.pct.org.tw/english/faith.htm>.